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Letters to Common Street Christians



by two brothers from berkeley

"... we're not into ~~writing a new version of the~~
Bible. There are plenty of good ones around and we
didn't think we were good enough 'scholars' to do
better than they. ... but we wanted to get the New
Testament down for right where kids are today. ~~Comes~~
of that, we had to get away from formal language and
~~dusty religious rap.~~" *Two Brothers from Berkeley*

Reflecting keen insight into the New Testament letters.
"Two Brothers from Berkeley" have perceptively and
reverently written down these letters in language
understood by young people today.

Some examples. . . .

"Okay, sisters and brothers, because of all this, and
using God's loving-kindness in your lives as a tool,
give your whole selves to Him. What else is there for
us to do, knowing what He's done for us?"

(Comes out of **Romans**)

"God's love can take anything that's thrown at it; it
never stops trusting and never gives up hope: it just
never quits. In fact, man, when everything else is
smashed, God's love still stands."

(Comes out of **I Corinthians**)



"Remember to use the spiritual abilities the Father
has given you by His Spirit. Don't hold back and play
chicken because He's given us a life style of power
and love in being a really together people. . . . be an
example in what you say, how you act, your love,
your trust in the Father, and your clean life."

(Comes out of **I Timothy**)

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Cover by Weedon Hardenbrook

*Letters to
Street
Christians*

Letters to Street Christians

by

TWO BROTHERS FROM BERKELEY

drawings by Lee Hardy

Zondervan Publishing House
Grand Rapids, Michigan

DEDICATED TO JESUS,
OUR LIBERATOR AND LEADER
FOREVER!

LETTERS TO STREET CHRISTIANS

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CONTENTS

Preface	7
Letter 1 comes out of Romans	11
Letter 2 comes out of I Corinthians	39
Letter 3 comes out of II Corinthians	65
Letter 4 comes out of Galatians	77
Letter 5 comes out of Ephesians	87
Letter 6 comes out of Philippians	99
Letter 7 comes out of Colossians	105
Letter 8 comes out of I Thessalonians	113
Letter 9 comes out of II Thessalonians	119
Letter 10 comes out of I Timothy	125
Letter 11 comes out of II Timothy	133
Letter 12 comes out of Titus	139
Letter 13 comes out of Philemon	145
Letter 14 comes out of Hebrews	149
Letter 15 comes out of James	173
Letter 16 comes out of I Peter	185
Letter 17 comes out of II Peter	195
Letter 18 comes out of I John	203
Letter 19 comes out of II John	215
Letter 20 comes out of III John	219
Letter 21 comes out of Jude	223

PREFACE — OR WHATEVER (ANYWAY, READ THIS FIRST)

We figured we ought to run down a few things for you before you get into the letters. In order to be behind what's inside, you gotta know where our heads are. Here's where we're coming from.

First off, we're not into writing a new version of the Bible. There are plenty of good ones around and we didn't think we were good enough "scholars" to do better than them. But there's a thing about how you say what you've got to say. Also, it's easier to rap to a person at a language level he's hip to. Now you may have trouble getting behind this, but the New Testament writers did just that. They wrote in a Greek called "common" which was a language of the street. (Check out the introduction to J. Gresham Machen's *New Testament Greek for Beginners*, Macmillan Co.) We wanted to get the New Testament down for right where kids are today. 'Cause of that, we had to get away from formal language and dusty religious rap.

But dig it. We talked with the Father an awful lot about this, and we had other brothers and sisters doing the same thing. Because of that, we believe that even though what we've done is a paraphrase, and not a substitute for a good translation of the New Testament, it's still true to what God's Spirit ran down in the original language.

Because of what we're into, we felt free to leave out the "personal historical references." If you want to get deep into them, or anything else that we have covered, get a Bible.

One last thing. What we used was the Greek New Testament and every English version we could lay our hands on (about thirty in all). We set them out on a table in front of us and dug into every phrase, sentence, and paragraph, and we talked with the Father about all of it.

So if you don't dig what's here, blame us; if you do, Praise the Father. We don't want to split the family. We want to see it together like the body of Jesus it is. We want it to be ready to celebrate when He comes back for us. We want it to see Him as its only leader right now.

Jesus is Lord! Maranatha!

Two Brothers from Berkeley

Letter I

“The good news isn't something to be ashamed of.
It's the way the living God liberates people from the
results of going their own way, when they trust
Him to do it.”

—Romans 1:16

Letter I

From brothers who see themselves as slaves to Jesus the Liberator, chosen by the Father to tell His Good News on the streets. It's the same Good News He promised a long time ago through the Jewish prophets in the Old Testament. They told about His unique Son, Jesus, how He'd be born in the line of the Jewish Kings (to give Him a high place in the human race). But the Father showed Him to be more than that. When God's Spirit brought Him back to life from the dead, He showed that our Liberator and Leader really is God's Son, the Messiah. That same Jesus called us to go tell people everywhere that the Father wants a personal relationship with them. This letter is to all you who have gotten into the relationship with Him and have been set apart as members of His forever family; and that's holiness! We write to you with the love and peace from the Father and His Son Jesus.

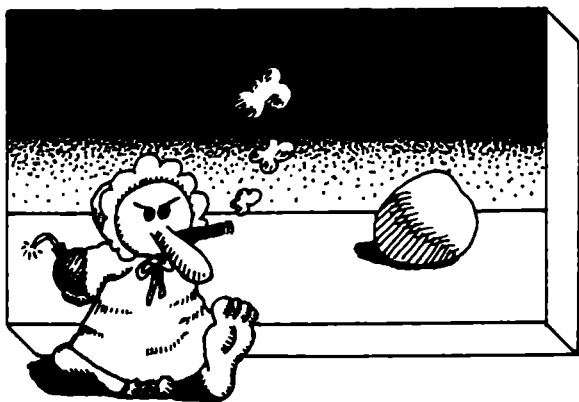
First of all we want you to know that we thank the Father through Jesus for your trust in Him which is being felt by people everywhere. The Father knows that we want to see the family getting it together, being together, sharing with each other, using the spiritual abilities He's given us, and helping each other to grow in our relationship with Him. We really *need* each other as brothers and sisters. But we owe people; we owe the Good News to *all* people everywhere. Birchers and businessmen, communists and creeps.

The Good News isn't something to be ashamed of. It's the way the living God liberates people from the results of going their own way, when they trust Him to do it! Beginning with the Jews, God laid it on all kinds of people: The only ones who *really* know Him are the ones who live in a relationship with Him.

On the other hand, here's a rap for you who don't know Him. God comes down hard on rejection of Him and His purity and truth. Men know about God; life itself shows that He exists. From the beginning, what

He's made and what He's said have shown mankind time after time who He is. But even knowing that, they wouldn't admit it or come into fellowship with His Spirit. Instead of digging what He had done for them, they went on their own head trips and got lost in their own darkness. They rapped big about their own wisdom and then showed how far from the truth they were. They made up for themselves gods that looked like people and animals and birds and snakes and other things that die and fade away, while all the time they should have been looking to the eternal Father. So God let them have their selfish trips and they went sexually crazy. People traded God's pure truth for a lie, a trick, a deception and wound up bowing down to themselves instead of the One who made them and really deserves their love.

That's why God let them get into all kinds of sexual things that their bodies weren't made to do — like women making it with women and men making it with men. And the hurt that they feel in their own lives and in the depths of their personalities is just what they deserve.



Since they didn't want to know the Father, He let them go as far as their evil minds would take them. So people are really wicked, wanting everything for themselves — hating, killing, lying, fighting, badmouthing. They hate God; they're proud and arrogant; they brag; they look for new ways to hurt others; they off their parents. Man, people just don't want to understand; they don't want to trust; they don't want to love others; they don't want to help anybody out. Knowing what God wants and knowing that they deserve to die for what they are doing, they keep it up and dig on others doing it too!

But before you get too indignant about "them," look at yourself. We're all guilty and you're no exception! God's perfect justice is no respecter of persons; and you're not going to get away with it any more than those you judge. Do you think the Father's kindness and patience and love to you is a put on? No, man, it's to make you turn from your rotten ways. If you keep on rejecting God and doing your own trip, you're just building up heavier punishment for yourself because there's gonna come a day when He's going to judge everybody, and He'll give everybody what he deserves. Those who really want to know Him and give their lives to doing what's right will get life forever with Him. But those who look out for no one and nothing but themselves are going to get nothing more than what they deserve. People who reject God are going to hurt forever, whether they are Jews or non-Jews. And those who accept Him (whether they are Jews or non-Jews) are going to share His honor and beauty and peace forever. The Father doesn't play favorites. People who reject Him and His way will be punished — no matter how much or how little they knew about Him. People who had the Bible (the Jews) will be judged according to what it sets down. People who have never read His word will be judged by the fact that they didn't follow what they knew about Him. It isn't what you know that

makes you right in His eyes, it's whether or not you accept the relationship He offers. When people who have never even seen a Bible set moral standards and codes like what God calls for, they show that inside they know what's right and in their heads their thoughts either defend or accuse them on that basis. Only you know what's in your head right now; but someday when Jesus comes back, He's going to expose and judge the thoughts of every person.

Now, say you're a Jew and you think you've got it made because God gave His law to the Jews, and you brag about it. At the same time you know what's right and understand the law. Do you think that you can lead other people in the right way and teach people who are young and foolish all that the law has to say? Why don't you teach yourself? Like it says, don't rip off your brother. Do you? It says a man shouldn't ball someone that's not his wife. Do you? It says that you shouldn't worship anyone or anything but God. Do you? You who talk about knowing God's law and go on breaking it bring nothing but shame to the Father. All over the world people laugh at God because of you. You can do all the far out, righteous, pious things to the outside of your body and do all the good acts that you want to, but if deep down inside you don't have a living relationship with the Father, it's all a bunch of wasted trash. The relationship with God is a matter of fellowship of your spirit with His, not of who your parents are.

So what good is it to be a Jew? What good is it to know God's law? Plenty! In the first place, the Jews were given the responsibility of knowing and spreading the living Word of God. Now some of them didn't do it, but does that cancel out God's truth? Forget it! Even if everybody on earth's a liar, God is still Truth. There's a line in Psalm 51 which says God always tells the truth and will never be proven guilty. So wow, if the Jews' wrongdoing proves that God is right, is God

wrong to punish them? Come on! How can a perfect God overlook imperfection? But if by their lies God is proven to be Truth to the rest of the world, why does He still want to punish them? The Jews are doing Him a favor. As a matter of fact, why not just say "Be as bad as you can so that others will see how good God is!" People who talk like that are on their way to hell!

Well then, are the Jews better than any other people? Not at all! We've seen Jews and everybody else doing wrong. The Old Testament ran it down:

No person is good, not even one.

Nobody understands.

Nobody wants to know God.

They have all turned away. They have all gone wrong.

There is not even one person around doing kindness, not even one.

Their words bring nothing but death to other people.

They lie and lay their bitter, hateful trips on everybody.

They're always ready to kill,

Ready to make trouble.

And they don't know what peace is all about.

They don't care what God wants for them.

Everybody that has brushed up against God's law knows that he's guilty. So nobody is ever going to show himself to be right in God's eyes by trying to keep that law because all you find out is that you can't cut God's standards.

But now the Father has given us a way to be right in His eyes that isn't even connected to the law (although both the law and the prophets pointed to it). That way is by trusting His Son, Jesus. Everybody's in the same bag — all people miss the mark of His perfection and purity. But anyone can have the free gift of being made right with the Father, and this comes through what Jesus did to buy us back from the world's system. The

whole world was watching when the Father gave His Son to spill His lifeblood to take the rap for everyone who would believe Him. Because of the Father's patience with people. He overlooked all the wrongdoing that men did before Jesus came. He did this so that He could show His perfection and purity right now and be seen as the One who is always right, who makes others right when they trust Jesus. So is there anyone who can brag about how well he's kept God's law? Forget it! The only law that stands is the law of faith. Man, you've got to stand on the fact that the only thing that makes a person right with God is trusting Jesus. And that doesn't have *anything* to do with keeping the law. And is our Father the God of just the Jews? No! If He *is* God, then He is God of the whole world. And since He is the God of everybody, He will accept and make right anybody who trusts Him. So does faith throw out the law? No, it puts the law right where it belongs and that's what we're going to rap to you about right now.

Take Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation. Was he right with God because of the good life he lived or because he trusted God? If it was because of his good life, he had something to brag about. But that's not the way God looked at him. The Bible says Abraham believed God and that's what put him in touch. The dude who works for something and gets it has it coming to him because of what he did. "The Man" didn't do him any favors; that's just fair. But with the Father it's not that way. There's no way you can work yourself into His family. It's the one who does not work but believes God who has right standing in God's eyes. Like King David said about the happiness of people who are made right with God without working for it:

Happy is the one whose wrongdoings are buried.
Happy is the one whose wrong God ignores.

So is this happiness available only to Jews or can everybody get in on the action? "Abraham believed

God and that gave him right standing" (Genesis 15:6). Now dig it! God gave the physical operation of circumcision to Abraham and the Jewish nation as a sign of their belonging to Him *after* Abraham trusted the Father. So Abraham became the spiritual father of the forever family before he ever became the physical father of the Jewish nation. So everyone can see that it's not by becoming a Jew that you get into the forever family but by following Abraham's example in trusting God. So dig it! God's promise to Abraham that he and his children would have the whole world someday wasn't because Abraham obeyed God's law, but because he trusted the Father, and those "children" are those who follow him in faith. So if you think you can get right with God by obeying His law, then you're calling God a liar and saying His promises are no good. Trying to keep God's law will just get you His punishment 'cause *you can't do it!* You know the only way not to break laws is not to have any, and what faith does is to remove law from our relationship with God. Membership in God's family is free to those who believe, so that all people who trust the Father can share His promises to Abraham whether they know the law or not. That's what the Bible means when it says God made Abraham "The father of many nations." The promise is good because of the One who made it: the One who brings the dead back to life and who makes things out of nothing. When every hope was wasted, Abraham still believed that God would make him the father of many nations. Trusting God, he didn't hassle with the fact that he was over a hundred and his wife was over ninety (never once having had a child) and that children were out of the question. He didn't doubt that God would do what He said He'd do, and he thanked God before it happened — because he knew God was able to do it. So wow, not because of circumcision, but because of this — his simple belief — Abraham had right standing with God. That promise wasn't just for Abraham, but for all of us who believe the One who brought Jesus back from the dead. Yep, Jesus,

the One who died because we are so rotten and was raised from the dead to make us truly good.

So, since *trusting* God makes us right with Him, receiving Jesus gives us peace with the Father. He was the One who introduced us into the relationship we stand in, and now we're waiting for Him to come back for us. But while we wait, we're going to be happy with hassles 'cause it builds up our patience for waiting. That patience makes us stronger human beings who trust the Father more. When we really get into this process, we won't be disappointed because God's love is poured all over our hearts by His Spirit who was given to us. Now dig this! When we were helplessly wasted, Jesus the Messiah came by God's plan to die for every rotten one of us. Now that's really far out 'cause you can hardly find someone who'll die even for good people (though sometimes it happens). But the Father dropped His love on us by sending His Son to die for us while we were still wallowing in our own vomit. Well then, how much more is He going to do for us now that we're in His forever family? Jesus will take us right out of God's judgment on the earth because His death paid the debt for our wrong and His resurrection gave us life forever. And that's not all! We can *celebrate* with the Father because of Jesus and the relationship that He gave us with the living God.

Think about it. All wrong came into the world through one man and death was the result. And nobody was able to stop that death from spreading to all people because they followed Adam in going their own way. Dig it! Men's hearts were evil even before God's law was set down for us to be guilty of breaking. Even before God gave the law to Moses, all the way back to the time of Adam, all men still died; not because they broke a law but because they went their own way. Like Adam was a painted picture of the reality of Jesus but in a different way. Adam went his own way and brought death to all people. Jesus followed the Father perfectly

and brought the hope of life to all mankind. God's free gift is just the opposite of Adam's selfish trip. Adam went his own way and all men die. Jesus gave Himself and all who receive Him live. Adam's *one* act laid death on all. But all of our selfish trips brought God's loving gift of His Son, Jesus the Messiah. Because of Adam, death became king. Because of Jesus' free gift, we become kings of life — forever. Because of one selfish act, all men face God's fair judgment; but by one perfectly *unselfish* act — acquittal and life is free to all. For just as Adam's disobedience warped the nature of all people, so by Jesus' obedience all can be restored to God's perfection. God gave the law to expose people for what they really are. But to every person who sees, God shows His free gift to be bigger than *all* evil. This is it, people: Evil has reigned in the kingdom of death. But now God's loving favor reigns in the kingdom of the forever family to those made right by Jesus the Messiah.

So where are we at? Should we be as bad as we can so God's love can overflow all the more? That's insane! How can people who are dead to evil keep living their old rotten lives? Aren't you hip to the fact that when the Spirit identified us with Jesus the Messiah, He identified us with His death? That identification is so total that when Jesus was buried, *you* were buried *with Him*. And just as the Father raised the Messiah from the dead, we too have been raised to a brand-new life. Dig it! Becoming one with Jesus in His death means that it's gotta be that we were one with Him in His resurrection too. Remember, the person we used to be died with Jesus when the spikes went in the wood so that our bodies which had been slaves to our rotten selves could be set free. (Like, how can a dead man do wrong — do *anything*?) So that's the way it goes down: We died with Jesus; now we'll live with Him. The Messiah, having come back from the dead, will never die again. Death can't touch Him anymore. When He

died. He died to all wrong and evil once and for all. And He's living a life of fellowship with the Father forever. Just like you know that, know this too: *You* are dead to evil and alive in fellowship with the Father forever.

Don't let evil run your life so that you follow anything it tells you to do. Don't keep on giving your bodies to your old dead person, but give your bodies, once and for all, to the Father as tools for doing His work. And if you do this, man, there is no way that evil can rule your life because you're not under a relationship of law but into a relationship of love.

So what's going to come next? "Let's do our thing. We aren't under law; we're protected by God's unconditional love." That's just as insane! Don't you know that when you're a slave, you're a slave to your owner? If you give yourself over to evil, that's what you belong to, and the result is death. But if you give yourself over to the Father, the result is a living relationship with Him. Dig it, brothers and sisters, you *used to be* slaves to your own selfish trips, but now that you've obeyed the Father, you've been freed from that slavery and have become slaves to Him. Well, not really slaves, but that shows how closely you're connected to Him. Once you were really into going your own way and you really pushed it. Now put yourselves into the relationship with the Father and be His special people, doing His work in the world. When you were a slave to evil, you were free from the Father. But where did it get you? Everything that went down then you're ashamed of now. All any of those things led to was death. But now that you're free from evil and are serving the Father, you're getting more like His Son and it all leads to your life forever with Him. It runs down like this: Your wage for evil is death, but God's free gift is life forever with Him, through Jesus, our Liberator and Leader.

Here's an illustration you can dig if you know Old Testament law. It comes out like this: God's law only

has power over you till you die. Say you're a married woman; you and your husband are supposed to be together for the rest of your lives. But if he dies, you aren't tied to him anymore, and if you want to, you can marry somebody else. Let's pretend you're married to a man who is going to live forever but you're in love with someone else. The only way you're going to get out of your first marriage is to die yourself. That's a picture of us as human beings. We're "married" to God's law all of our lives and bound to live by it. But when we received Jesus, we died to the law because we were united with Him on that cross where He died. Our "marriage" to God's law was over when we died with Jesus, and our "marriage" to Jesus began when we rose with Him from the dead. Just as a human marriage results in children, our "marriage" to Jesus is to bring results pleasing to God. When we were "married" to God's law, that relationship stirred up our selfish selves and brought ungodly results. But now we're turned loose from that relationship — dead to it. So now we're guided in love by God's Spirit instead of being pushed around by His law.

But does that mean the law is evil? Not a chance. We wouldn't even know what it means to be bad if it weren't for the law. We wouldn't have known it was wrong to rip off people if the law hadn't said, "Don't rip off people." What really went down was that my evil nature rebelled against God's law and made me want to rip off everybody. Here's something you gotta get into because it's the experience of most all the brothers and sisters:

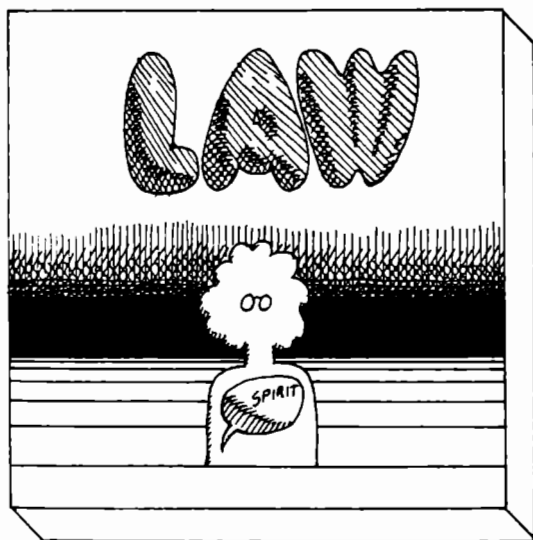
"When I first met Jesus, I was alive with His Spirit and I didn't even think about the law. But then it started laying its trips on me again. And I got sick and wasted in my life with Jesus. The law which was supposed to point me to life was killing me! My old evil self grabbed God's good law, faked me out, and killed my walk with Jesus. Yeah, God's law is a good thing, but didn't that good thing bring me to deadness in my relationship with Jesus? If so, there's a contradiction. No! God's

law in its perfect rightness just kept on showing me how bad I was. The law came right out of the perfection of God's Spirit. But my body was, on its own, acting like a slave to evil. I want to serve Jesus like God's law demands, but I don't even come close. That just proves to me how perfect the law is. So when I do wrong, it's like it's not me doing it but the evil that's in my old human nature. And I know that nature is really bummed up. I know it because I keep wanting to do what's right and it just won't let me get it on. What happens is that I don't do the good things I want to and I do the bad things I don't want to. So that's why I say it seems like it's my old human nature rather than me. I get a principle out of this: When I want to do right, I get messed over by the wrong desires of my human nature. On a spiritual level I can really get behind God's law, but the law of my human nature fights a war with me — and wins. My life with Jesus tells me to do what's right. But my human nature loves to do wrong. Messed up like this, how can I ever get rid of that lousy human nature?"

Thank You, Jesus! It's Your problem, not ours!

There should be no fear of punishment for the forever family because for all of us who belong to Jesus there will be no punishment. There is only one law in our relationship to Jesus and that is the law of His Spirit of life which has already set us free from any law of our human nature. The law couldn't help us because it didn't change our human nature. But the Father, in sending Jesus in a body just like ours to pay for the evil of human nature, took away its power. This means that the perfectness the law demands can happen in the lives of those who live in vital connection with His Spirit instead of doing what their human nature tells them to do. People who live according to their human nature are going to have their heads into the evil they should have left behind. But those who follow God's Spirit are going to have their heads into what He wants. If what you're really behind is your human nature, your walk

with Jesus is dead. But if your life is totally run by His Spirit, there is life and peace. That's because the desires of the human nature are centered on the body and are against God; the human nature doesn't obey God's law — it can't! And no one who lives that kind of life can please God. But that's not where you are if you really have the living connection with Jesus. If that connection isn't real for you, then you don't belong to Him. It's important to know this: When His Spirit lives in you, your human nature is dead because it's evil, but your spirit is truly alive forever because of His perfection. And the Father who raised Jesus the Messiah from the dead will give your body His life by His Spirit.



So, sisters and brothers, we don't owe anything to our human nature. We don't have to live like it wants us to, because if you live like that, you're gonna die. But if you are living by the power of God's Spirit in you

and are letting Him kill off those evil desires, you are *really* alive. Man, that's because all people who let God's Spirit lead them are His children. And His Spirit in us doesn't make us slaves, afraid of God, but children who call Him "Daddy." The Spirit Himself whispers deep inside us that we really are kids in the Father's family. What a Father has belongs to His children, too, and everything that the Father gives Jesus. He's going to give us; because if we're tied right in with Him in His suffering, we will be honored with Him when He rules the universe.

The hurt and hassle that we feel right now doesn't amount to anything compared to the greatness that we're going to be into with Him. God's whole universe can hardly wait for His children to be shown to be what they really are. From the very beginning the creation was on its way to changing and falling apart. Not because it wanted to be, but because in the Father's plan it was to be set free right along with His children. The guts of the whole universe are screaming, and our insides are like that, too. Even though we've got the Spirit inside to tell us who we are, we still ache for the day we won't have to hurt anymore — the day we'll have our new, forever bodies from the Father. Hoping for this drew us out of ourselves and into the Father's family. Since it hasn't happened yet, we're still looking forward to what the Father's going to do. That, sisters and brothers, is going to teach us patience!

Also the Spirit helps us when our patience fails and we hurt so bad we can't even talk to the Father. That's when the Spirit talks for us and the Father understands without our even saying a word. And Jesus, who knows exactly where our heads are, knows what the Spirit means because He's always talking with the Father about our needs. Know this children: No matter what comes down in our lives, the Father will make good of it for those of us in His forever family.

The Father knew all along who would respond to His love. And He planned to make them like Jesus so that He would be the oldest of a big family of children. Now

He spoke to every one of these people deep inside their hearts, made them right with Himself, and gave them a share of all that He is.

What's left to say? If the Father's on our side, who cares who's against us? Look, He didn't even hold back His perfect Son, but let Him be killed for us. So doesn't it make sense that He'd give us everything? Is there a person alive who can charge us with guilt? We were acquitted by God! Can any judge sentence us? Jesus died for us, took our rap, came back from the dead, and is right now with the Father — talking with Him about what we need. Now who's going to rip us off from the love of Jesus? Will bad times or head hassles, oppression or starvation, poverty or danger or threats of death? There's a saying in a Psalm that those of us who belong to Jesus are in danger of being killed at any moment. It's like we're marked sheep in a slaughterhouse. But no matter what comes down, we still win big because Jesus loves us and He's on our side. We know for sure that neither life nor death, angels nor demons, present nor future, natural forces nor distances, nor anything else, including ourselves, can separate us from the Father's love that He showed us by putting Jesus in our hearts.

Knowing what we know about how the Father chose them a long time ago, it really hurts us to see the way the children of Israel have rejected Him. It's no jive to say that they've really blown it when you think about the promises the Father gave them, the way He worked in the lives of their forefathers, and the sending of Jesus the Messiah (His perfect Son) through them.

But let's look at it another way. God's promise was not wasted. If you can dig it, not everybody descended from Israel belongs to God's Israel; nor are all people descended from Abraham really the children of Abraham according to the promise that God gave him. God told Abraham, "My promises apply only to your children through Isaac." That means that not all of the children

of Abraham are children of God. God's children are only those who are born through believing His promise. What God told Abraham was, "I'm setting a time when Sarah is going to have a son." That was a promise, and Abraham's son Isaac was born. Then when Isaac's wife Rebekah was pregnant, God talked to her about the twins she was carrying. Now they weren't born yet, so neither one could have done anything better than the other. But God made a promise to show that what He does doesn't depend on what men do. He told Rebekah, "The one born first will serve the other one." Later on in the Bible it says, "I've been a friend to Jacob and an enemy to Esau." Does that mean God doesn't treat people right? Forget it! He told Moses, "I'll decide who I'm going to have mercy on. I'll decide who I'm going to be kind to." So like it doesn't depend on what man wants or does, but on God's mercy. Like the Father said to the king of Egypt, "I gave you this country for no other purpose than to show My power to the whole world." God's kind to some people just because He wants to be, and He makes other people hard-hearted on the same basis.

So maybe you say, "Why does He come down on me? How could I fight His purpose?" Well, people, the question ought to be, "Who am I to question the living God?" When a potter makes a jar, can the jar say, "Why did you make me like this?" Doesn't the potter have a right to make a beautiful vase and a garbage pot out of the same lump of clay? Yeah, well doesn't God have the same rights? The amazing question is why God hasn't offed us all! Even though someday He's going to have to show His anger against all evil and wrongdoing, right now He's holding back patiently. He's doing this in order to pour out all His perfection and love on us whom He has chosen — not just from the Jews but from all human beings. Like He said through the prophet Hosea:

I will call people who are not Jews "My children"
And will love people who have never been loved.

And people who have been told, "You don't belong to God,"

Will be called "Sons of the living God."

And Isaiah said, "Even though there are as many Jews as there is sand in the sea, only a few will accept His love; and He will carry out His judgment and cut them off." It's just like Isaiah predicted, "If God hadn't saved a few, we would have been wiped out like Sodom and Gomorrah."

Well, brothers and sisters, let's wrap it up. People who never tried to be right with God were made right by trusting Him. But the Jews who tried to follow God's law were never able to make it. Why? Because they didn't trust God but tried to make it on their own. In the Old Testament these words are written about Jesus: "I'm going to lay a stumbling stone in Zion — a Rock that will offend people. But whoever trusts Him will never be disappointed." And that's the very Rock the Jews stumble over.

One thing we're talking to the Father about a lot is that the Jews might come back to Him. They really long to know Him but they don't know how. They want so much to be right with God, but they try to do it on their own and won't let Him give them His free gift. Dig it! Jesus *is* everything that the law was pushing for. He brings right standing with God to all people who receive Him. Moses said that if you're going to get right with God by following the law, then the only way you'll live is by obeying perfectly everything that it says. But right standing with God by trusting Him says something like this: "You don't have to worry about going up to heaven to bring Jesus down to us. And you don't have to worry about trying to bring Him back from the dead. The answer to your problem is in your own heart and mouth. If your mouth says 'Jesus is Lord' because you believe in your heart that the Father raised Him from the dead, then you have life with Him. It's in your heart that you know Him, and it's with your mouth that you

let people know." The Bible says, "Nobody who trusts in Him will ever be disappointed." Jews and non-Jews alike are on the same footing with God because if He's God, He's God of everybody and He's kind to all people who trust Him. Like it says, "God will take care of anyone who cries out to Him." But how can they cry out to someone they don't trust? And how can they trust someone they haven't heard about? And how can they hear about Him unless somebody tells them? And why would anyone go tell them unless he was sent? But the Bible says, "Wow! People who come with Good News are really welcome." So get it on!

Of course, not everybody will listen. Like Isaiah complained, "Lord, nobody's listening." Sure, they trust only after they listen to the message about Jesus. But when you ask, "What about people in the past? Didn't they ever hear?" there's only one answer. "The Good News has gone out to all the earth and its words to the end of the world." (Psalm 19:4) But what about the Jews? Did they know God's purpose? They sure did, because Moses said, "I'm gonna make you jealous with people that don't amount to nothin' and drive you up walls by blessing people who don't know Me." Isaiah went even further and wrote that the Father said, "I will be found by people who aren't even looking for Me and show Myself to people who don't want Me." At the same time He says about the Jews, "I keep reaching for them and they keep going their own way, refusing My free gift."

So what's happening? Has the Father turned His back on the Jews? Of course not! God would never throw away the people that He picked for Himself. Have you ever read what the Bible says about Elijah? He started crying, "Lord, they killed all Your prophets, they tore up Your altars; I'm the only one You've got left and they're trying to kill me." You know what God said to him? "Dig it, Elijah, there're seven thousand people here who still love Me." The same thing is happening

. There are still a few Jews coming to Jesus, n by the Father to do His work. And if He chose it wasn't because of what they've done — other- his choosing them doesn't mean a thing. Here's ay it runs down: Most of the Jews aren't right with Some of them are, but the rest He has let get r and harder toward Him. It's like Isaiah wrote: od has put them to sleep. le shut their eyes and closed their ears, o that even now they don't understand why Jesus came.

l David said:

et their rich food and all their stuff trap them into thinking they're right with God. et them be blind and bent over by the weight of all the wrong they've done.

es that mean that God has cancelled out the Jews er? Not at all. When they showed that they didn't to be God's family. He made it possible for people er the world to be His children. He did this so that the Jews saw what was going down they'd get is and want to be His family again. Now, if their ing out on God has brought so much joy to us now Jesus, imagine what a gas it's going to be l of us together when the Jews finally see God's We ought to share God's plan with every Jew we to make them want what we have and give them nce to have it. If the Jews' copping out on God the rest of the world a chance to hear the Good . then when they finally accept it, it will be dead e coming back to life. If God set apart the fathers e Jewish nation as His special people, then their ndants are set apart too. Like, take a mental im- f a tree. Abraham and the Jewish forefathers are oots of this tree of faith. The living branches are descendants who accepted the living connection God by faith. But there were some dead branches e who didn't believe) and they were broken off so outsiders like us (non-Jews) who trust Jesus could

be grafted into the living connection. Now don't get into a head trip about how much better you are than them. Remember, you aren't the natural branches; you were just grafted in 'cause you trusted Him. And if you aren't trusting Him but are just there on a mind bite, the graft won't take and you very well could be replaced by a natural branch. That's because God is so kind and accepting of those who trust Him but doesn't hesitate to cut off those who don't.

Like this is kind of a mystic thing, but the reason God let the Jews be partly numb to His Good News is so that all of us non-Jews who trust Him would have a chance to come into His family. Once that has happened the Jewish nation will come to Him. Like Isaiah wrote:

The Liberator will come out of God's city and take away all evil from Israel.

This is my agreement with them — to take away their evil ways.

As far as the Good News is concerned, they are God's enemies so you can get into the family. As far as God is concerned, He loves them because of their forefathers. His promises to them can never be taken back. Now non-Jews going their own way rather than God's have a chance to know Him because the Jews turned away from Him. Someday the Jewish nation which turned away will again be given that same chance to know Him. So dig it! God has let every nation under the sun fall into its own wasted trip so He could offer His loving-kindness to all people.

Wow! The Father is so wise and loving and good to us. No wonder people can't understand Him or what He's up to. Like the Old Testament says, "Who knows what God is thinking? Who can claim to be His advisor? Who can claim God owes him dues?" He's the source, guide, and goal of everything that exists. Praise Him! Right on!

OK, sisters and brothers, because of all this, and using God's loving-kindness in your lives as a tool, give

your whole selves back to Him. What else is there for us to do, knowing what He's done for us? Don't let the world system squeeze you into its plastic mold. Instead, bust out of it by letting God's Spirit give you a brand-new mind. Then you'll be able to live and enjoy the good and perfect life that God wants you to have.

Dear people, let's not get on a big ego trip about our own importance in the family, but let the Father show us where we're at in the family through our living connection with Him. Just like there are many parts to our own bodies and they don't all do the same thing, so we are all parts of Jesus' body, the forever family, and we all need each other to do His work. That's why He's given us different spiritual abilities, so let's use them right according to how much we trust the Father. If your ability is prophecy, then do it; if it's serving people, take good care of them; if it's teaching, get into it; if God gives you the ability to stir brothers and sisters to action, then get it on; if you've got a lot of bread, use it to help the family instead of yourself; if you have the ability of leadership, concentrate on doing a good job; if He's made you a mirror of His loving-kindness, then be happy about it and don't hold back.

Let the Father's love flow through you. Weed out what is evil in your life and hold on to the good things of God. Care about each other with the love God gives you as brothers and sisters, each one putting the others ahead of himself. Don't get lazy, but let His spirit burn you out serving Jesus. Remember where your real hope lies so you can stick it out thru the bad times, wrapped up in talking to the Father. Pour out your bread for the sisters and brothers who need it and take in people who need food or a place to stay. Be kind to people who come down on you and instead of badmouthing them, love'em. Get into people's lives — laughing when they're happy, crying when they hurt. Get your heads together. Don't try to be important but get behind the humble jobs. Don't think you've got all the answers. If somebody burns you, forget it. Always do what's right. Live in peace with every life you touch. Leave all the

revenge up to God. It's like He told Moses, "Revenge is mine, I'll do all the getting even." For your part, like Proverbs says: Feed your enemy when he's hungry; when he's thirsty, give him something to drink, and he'll burn with shame. Don't get swamped when all the bad comes down; instead, walk all over the bad with nothing but goodness.

Submit yourself to the authority of the place you live in. God placed this world under the control of the human race and somebody has to be in charge everywhere. People who are in ruling positions are supposed to put down evil and protect good. Sometimes they do it and sometimes they don't. No matter what comes down, you should dig on your relationship with the Father and follow His Spirit. If you do that, you can be happy no matter what happens to you. If some authority comes down with a law in conflict with the Father's authority, you obey the Father. Your obedience to authorities is not because of fear but because you want to do what's right, and that's what authority is *supposed* to be all about. So as God's people we pay taxes, tolls, etc., and we show respect because the people in charge are supposed to represent God.

You shouldn't owe anybody anything, but there's one thing you'll always owe everybody and that's love. We talked about being subject to authority, but God's children live by one law — the law of His love. If we go back and add up the commandments in the Jewish law — "don't ball people you're not married to," "don't rip off property," "don't rip off lives," and all the rest of them — the total is "love other people like you love yourself." Love never hurts anybody. God's love gets you where the law wanted you to be.

People, wake up! The hour is close at hand when Jesus will be back for us. The night is almost over; the Son is ready to shine. Get rid of gigs people dig doing in the dark. Dress yourselves with Jesus' pure light. Let's get behind the fact that we are in the light and

let's live like it. Don't spend your time getting drunk or stoned. Forget about bed hopping and abusing sex. Don't hassle each other or be jealous. Get wrapped up in Jesus and forget about tripping on what your body tells you it wants to do.

Sometimes brothers and sisters will come around who haven't learned much yet about trusting Jesus with their lives. Accept them for who they are and don't hassle them. Like take food, for example. Sometimes a person comes into the family who doesn't think it's right to eat meat. Until that new child in Jesus gets stronger in his trust, don't hassle him about being a vegetarian. Or if you've got a thing about not eating meat, don't come down on those who eat it. The Father accepts us all just like we are. Who are you to judge someone's employee? The brothers and sisters are all working for Jesus forever, so it's up to Jesus to decide how good a job they do. And don't sweat it, He'll make sure everyone He hires does the job He wants them to do.

Some brothers and sisters may think that a certain day should be set aside as special to God. Others don't see any difference from one day to the next. On things like this, each member of the family should decide between himself and Jesus. That way, people who do set aside certain days do it for Jesus; people who eat on every day do it as the Father's children, thanking Him; people who fast on certain days also do it as the Father's children, thanking Him. So like we said, if we're part of the family, we belong to Jesus. We don't live for ourselves; we don't die for ourselves. If we live, we live for Jesus. If we die, we die for Jesus. Whether we live or die, we belong to Jesus. That's why He died and lived again — so He could be the Liberator of both the living and the dead. So why should we be shining on other members of the family? Someday we're all going to face the Father's supreme court. Like Jesus says:

As sure as I live,
every knee will bend to me

and every tongue will praise the Father.
So like *He's* the One we have to answer to.

Don't be criticizing each other. Instead, try to live so that you won't be tripping up your brothers and sisters by the way you act. Frankly, we're convinced that there is nothing in God's creation that, of itself, hurts your fellowship with the Father. But if you *think* there is something that does, then you're right — it does. And, brother, then you're not following God's law of love. Don't mess over someone else that Jesus died for by your trip. It's really good if you've got a strong trust in the Father, but don't let the way you act bring criticism down on Him. Remember that being in the family is being wrapped up in the goodness and peace and joy of digging on the relationship with His Spirit rather than what you eat and drink. If you remember this, the Father will dig it and your brothers and sisters will dig it too. So put your head into getting it together and do things for each other. Don't rip off God's work in the sisters and brothers for "your thing." Sure all things are cool, but they turn to evil if you hurt somebody else by doing them. It's good not to eat meat, drink wine, or do anything that could hurt a brother or sister. You trust Jesus for a thing? Cool. But don't dangle your freedom in somebody else's face. If you don't feel at peace about what you're into, stop it. It's wrong for you to be into it.

Those of us who are strong ought to help the weaker members of the family instead of just worrying about ourselves. Jesus didn't live for Himself. Like the Old Testament says about Him, "The insults people dropped on you fell on me." This, and everything else in the Old Testament, was written to teach us patience and hope. Now let's let the Father who gives hope and patience get our heads together with Jesus' attitude toward each other so together we can sing praises to Him. Open up your lives to each other just like Jesus opened up our way into the family.

When Jesus came, He served the Jews to show that

God was true to His promises. And He served the non-Jews so that they would thank God for His loving-kindness. Several things written in the Old Testament show this.

I'll talk about You all around the world and sing praises to You.

Everybody in the world. be happy along with the Jews.

Praise the Lord all you non-Jews.

Everybody praise Him.

A descendant of Jesse will come who will rule the world.

People from all nations will trust Him.

So we're trusting the Father who gives us hope to fill you so full of joy and peace that you'll overflow with hope through the power of His Spirit in your lives.

Brothers and sisters, we are convinced that you are full of His goodness and His knowledge and fully able to help each other. Still we've laid it on pretty heavy in this letter in order to remind you of where you are and who you are.

Keep yourselves open to wherever the Spirit might tell you to serve the Father. Who knows; God might use you to make Isaiah's prophecy come true.

People who have never been told about Him will see, and people who have never heard will understand.

And something about what you do with your bread. Take an example from your brothers and sisters who are pouring out their resources to other brothers and sisters who are hurting. Lots of them are glad to do this because they know how much they owe to members of the family who have helped them. It was some sister or brother who brought you the Good News — shared their spiritual wealth. The least you can do is share your bread.

God's word says a lot about the family having to share

in the suffering of Jesus. There are sisters and brothers right now who are putting their necks on the line for Him and the people around them, and they're *feeling* that suffering a lot more than we are. We don't dare forget to talk to the Father about those sisters and brothers. And while you're at it, don't forget to talk to Him about the sisters and brothers who are working hard to help you.

Be warm and real when you see each other.

We beg you to watch out for people who split up the family and cause brothers and sisters to take their eyes off Jesus. Keep people like that away from you because they're not serving Jesus. Their cool-sounding head trips are just going to snuff your relationship with Him. No matter how strong your trust is, you have to be ready to deal with people like that and yet keep your heads clear of their evil trips. And remember, the God of peace is going to smash Satan soon.

A last word. Let's just be quiet and think of how wonderful and powerful the One is who can take people like us and make us His children. And it all happens through hearing the Good News about Jesus — which was never understood but is now plain to everybody. God has used His word to tell all people everywhere, and all they have to do is trust Him. Praise Him, people, praise Him!

Letter 2

“God's love can take anything that's thrown at it; it never stops trusting and never gives up hope; it just never quits. In fact, man, when everything else is smashed, God's love still stands.”

—I Corinthians 13:7

Letter 2

From brothers called by God to share on the streets the Good News about Jesus the Messiah. To the Christians in Sin City, members of His forever family, set apart from this messed up world system by Jesus Himself — and to all brothers and sisters everywhere who know Jesus as God, your Leader and ours. We'd like to wish you peace from the Father and His Son in the middle of this upside-down world.

Wow! We are so thankful to our Father for you and for what He did for all of us when Jesus went to the cross — and that He has given you a heavy new life-style, so you can be able and ready to tell others about that Good News and what it's doing in your life. You're all set to eat up everything He gives you while you wait for Him to come back for all of us. By His Holy Spirit in your heart He proves that you will never be busted for breaking God's law — so that when He comes you



will be free. Our Father never cops out on a member of His forever family.

But now, sisters and brothers, we're going to lay a heavy rap on you. Get yourselves together and quit hassling with each other. Where it's at is to be working together as parts of the same body, so why do you keep hassling? Like some people say that you have to "speak in tongues" to know God's power in your life, while others say that you shouldn't "speak in tongues" at all. Some say that the King James Bible is God's only Word in English, while others won't even read out of it. Others self-righteously say, "I'll just follow Jesus." Jesus is torn apart by your selfish trips. Is there more than one Messiah? Which one of these ideas was it that died on the cross for you? Can you claim that following one of them has given you eternal life? *Quit it!* It was Jesus who died for your rotten ways, and He is the one who has given you life. This is the Good News that set you free. It wasn't a plastic rap or special words because that would deny the force and power of Jesus' sacrifice.

Dig it! For those who don't know Jesus, the cross is jive, but for us who know Him it is the power that has changed our lives. God ran it down in the Old Testament: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and won't even consider the cleverness of the clever." So where is the intellectual? Where is the businessman? Where is the politico with all of the answers? Hasn't our Father shown us how useless all their earthly wisdom is? Since even the sharpest human mind trip wouldn't make it possible to know God, He opened up the way for those who believe Him like little children. So people everywhere are trying to get out of their heads, while we tell about the reality of Jesus the Messiah — killed on the cross for every one of us. Now that doesn't make a bit of sense to a dope freak or to a politico who thinks you have to change the system to change men. But to those who know Jesus, He is both the power and wisdom of God Himself because this "foolish" plan of God's does what could not be done by all man's intellectualism;

and God in His greatest weakness (the cross) is stronger than man's greatest strength.

Just look at yourselves. Not many of you would be considered intellectuals and very few of you are from the ruling class. No, God has chosen foolish, stupid people like us in order to bring down the intellectuals and the rulers. And He uses the simple things in life that the wise see as wasted to show up the worthlessness of their plastic trash so that nobody can brag in God's face. But your very life comes from Jesus, and it's through our living connection with Him that we are truly wise, truly good, and made part of God's family forever. That's why God ran it down, "If you're doing any bragging, brag about Jesus."

That's also why when we told you about Jesus, we didn't use any intellectual jive or rhetoric, but only rapped the straight Good News. Let's face it, people, that's all there is — the person of Jesus the Messiah and the fact of His death on the cross. Even though we speak in weakness and fear, the strength of that message still stands. It can't be done with intellectualism and rhetoric but only by the convincing power of God's Spirit. Dig it! Your faith has to stand on the power of Jesus in your life, not on any philosophical jive.

On the other hand, with people who have grown in their relationship with Jesus, we can have a mutual rap about God's wisdom. Now that's not a wisdom that comes from the system of men's minds (because that whole structure is going to get ripped off), but it is the revealing of God's great plan for making us members of His family forever. The leaders of the past, or of today, didn't know anything about it or they never would have crucified Jesus, the only true Liberator. That's what the prophet Isaiah meant when he said, "No human being, within the scope of his five senses, can understand what far-out things God has put together for His children — the ones who love Him." We know about them because God has put His Spirit inside us to tell us, and He does. Nobody's hep to what anybody else is thinking except

that person himself. So, nobody can know God's thoughts except His own Spirit. And dig this, God has put His Spirit inside us to replace the spirit of the world system and to tell us about the free gifts He's given us. We're not laying a bunch of philosophical rhetoric on you but just telling you what God's Spirit teaches — giving His truth in His language. People who don't know Jesus can't get behind what we're talking about because it seems like trivia to them. They can't dig it because you have to know God's Spirit to know what He's saying. People who know Him do understand while the people who don't, don't understand *them*. Listen, who can understand the mind of God anyway? Only those who know Him — and we do!

But, brothers and sisters, there's a problem. Some of you aren't listening to His Spirit. It's like you're babies who have to drink milk instead of eating solid food. You're living like people who don't know God — quarreling and fighting with each other. Hassling over doctrine is like men who don't know Jesus hassling over money. Don't get hung up on doctrines or leaders; it's God who makes us grow. You learn about Jesus from one person, while another teaches you how to grow, but neither one is important because it's always God who is moving in your life. Those God calls to help you work with Him. But we all work together, like building a building. Each member of God's family builds on the foundation. That foundation is Jesus and what He did for us in dying on the cross and rising from the dead. We all build together with gold, silver, and precious stones or wood, hay, and gravel. When Jesus comes back, we'll find out how well each one has done his work because the fire of His purity and truth will test its worth. If our building on that foundation has been according to His blueprint, it will stand the test and be rewarded. If not, it will be burned up and we'll escape with only our lives — like God had pulled us out of the fire.

Get it straight, it's not a building of bricks; it's a

building of people. You are part of that building — the building that God lives in. If anyone damages that building, God will “Do him some damage” because His building is special to Him.

Don't be fooling yourself. If you're building on this foundation with this world's wisdom, it's going to be burned down. So if you're heavy into the wisdom of this world, chuck it and be called a fool so God can turn you on to His true wisdom. Remember man's wisdom is jive to God, and the Old Testament says, “He uses their wisdom to trap them,” and “He knows how useless their thoughts are.” So don't be proud of following the wise men of this world. Life, death, the world, the present, the future, and everything else belongs to you and you belong to Jesus and He belongs to God.

Look at it this way. Your spiritual leaders should be looked on as servants of Jesus and teachers of His truth. Usually we want to know if a teacher is trustworthy, but God's teachers are not accountable to you or even to themselves. They are accountable only to God. So let's not get in a hurry to decide whether someone is a good servant of the Lord. When Jesus comes back, He will expose the hidden motives of men's hearts. Then we'll all get whatever praise we deserve from Him.

Don't go beyond what the Bible says in following any one teaching. It will only make you proud and bring division between you and your brothers and sisters. What is there to be proud about anyway? Do you have anything that you weren't given? And if it was given to you, why brag as if you had done something yourself?

We are rich. Here we are all apathetic, while there are brothers and sisters suffering for Jesus. They suffer while people honor us. They have been condemned to death and made foolish in the eyes of men. People say their religion has drugged them out of their minds. They are weak and hungry; we are fat and full. People respect us and they are laughed at. Right now they go hungry

and thirsty; they don't have enough clothes; they are beaten and their homes are prison cells. They work hard for nothing. People curse them and they answer in love. They meet severe oppression with patience. People lie about their character and yet our brothers and sisters invite them into God's family. This, in the face of being called the scum of the earth and garbage.

We haven't written this to make you feel ashamed but to warn you. Remember those who are your true spiritual leaders and who brought you to Jesus. Follow their example. Let them help choose your teachers. Don't get proud, thinking they can't help you anymore. And remember, Jesus is coming soon and He'll show up which ones have the real thing and which ones are just good talkers. The nation of God isn't heavy raps; it's His Spirit's power. Where are you going to be when He gets here?

Look, where are you now? We know some of you are balling. Some of you are sleeping with other people's wives. Some of you are going to bed without even thinking about it. And still you keep such a snobbish pride, thinking yourselves to be so spiritual. You should be getting rid of people who act like this. What you ought to do is get the brothers and sisters together, letting Jesus guide you by His Spirit, and talk it over with the people who are doing these things. If they keep it up, put them out of your fellowship. Satan, leading them along by their own desires, will destroy their bodies, but their spirits will go to be with Jesus. The terrible thing is that you're bragging so about how close to Jesus you are and yet you're letting things like this go on. Don't you know that even a little bit of evil can bum up the whole body? Clean house! Get rid of this garbage! You should be as clean in your relationships with others as Jesus, by His sacrifice, has made you in our Father's eyes. Let's celebrate — not in the moral waste of the world system but in sincerity and truth.

Now what we've said and what you've heard about not associating with immoral people doesn't mean you

should stay away from unbelievers. People who don't know Jesus and are sexually loose, greedy, burn artists — people like that are the ones you're called to minister to, but you shouldn't be maintaining a family relationship with anybody who claims to be a brother or sister in Jesus and keeps on doing these things. Remember, judging people outside the family of Jesus is just not our bag. That's God's responsibility. Let's keep our own house clean.

Like whenever you've got a hassle with a brother, stay away from the courts. Get together and put it in front of other brothers and sisters and let them decide what's right. Someday we, as members of our Father's family, are going to become judges ourselves. So why shouldn't we be able to take care of these little things now? If there's something you feel has to go to the courts, why would you ever go to an unbeliever to decide the case? You ought to be ashamed! Isn't there any brother who has his head straight enough to judge what's right and wrong in the family? But brothers go to court against brothers in front of judges who don't even know Jesus. Once you've done this, you've already admitted defeat to the world's system. Why not be ripped off and let it go? Why not lose some possessions? Are *things* all *that* important? Taking a brother or sister to court cheats him of the love and forgiveness Jesus wants you to show him.

Remember, no one is in the forever family unless he has been made right with God thru Jesus. Let's not fool ourselves; people who get drunk all the time, people who really dig on dope, who are heavy into free sex and homosexuality, who are thieves, bad mouthers, astrology freaks, and like that — are not in the forever family. These are the very life styles you used to have. But you have been washed clean from all this trash, set apart, and made right with God; not by anything you have done but by Jesus and His Spirit in you.

I can do anything I want to because of this new-found freedom, but there are some things I shouldn't do. Jesus

has set me free from God's law, but I'm not going to get hooked on my own selfish desires. Like even something as important as food. Food was made for our stomachs and our stomachs were made for food, but God's going to wipe them both out when Jesus comes back. It's the same way with all the desires of our bodies. Sex is an important desire, but God didn't make it for us to just ball anybody that comes along. Our bodies were made for Jesus and to be filled up completely by Him. Besides, someday God's going to remake our bodies just like He did Jesus' body. On the other hand, our bodies right now are parts of Jesus Himself. Should I take part of Jesus and unite Him with a woman He hasn't given me as my wife? Forget it! God tells us that two people joined in the sex act become one person. To be one person with more than one person is to prostitute the act and the reason God gave it to us. No, child of Jesus. When you meet Him, you are united with Him in one Spirit. That's why we say run away from wrong sex acts. No other wrong things that you could do affect the body the way this one does. God's Holy Spirit is inside your body and that body does not belong to you anymore. Dig it! God bought you, and the price was Jesus hanging on the cross. So honor God with your body.

Now to answer some of your questions. The way things are it's a good thing for a man not to touch a woman. But with all the balling that's going on, it's best to get married. Then the husband and wife should pay attention to each other's needs and remember that they belong to each other for life. They shouldn't hold back from sexual relations with each other unless they agree to for a short time so that they can spend their whole time talking to Jesus. Afterwards they should come back together again so that Satan can't tempt them through their desires. We're not saying you *have* to get married, but God wants you to have freedom in your relationships with each other and your relationship with Him.

As far as marriage itself goes, these are hard times. It would be far-out for us as individuals if all of us had the ability to live without sexual activity. But we don't all have that ability, and it's a lot better for a person to get married than to be all hassled up by sex desire.

If you're already married, God's got something to say to you about your lives together. First of all, a wife should stay with her husband. If she does leave him, she should stay unmarried or get it together with her husband again. And husbands shouldn't leave their wives either. Also, even though God doesn't say you have to, if a brother has a wife who doesn't know Jesus and she'll live with him, he shouldn't leave her. Same for a sister in the same situation. Like the one who does know Jesus (husband or wife) brings the partner into touch with other Jesus people and the children have a chance to get behind the Good News. But if the one who doesn't know Jesus decides to leave, let him split; God won't hold you responsible, and He wants us to live at peace with each other. Besides, you don't know if you'll be able to help your partner come to Jesus anyway.

So when you meet Jesus, don't be in a big hurry to change the situation you're in. If you belong to a church, don't drop out just because you've met Jesus. If you don't belong to one, don't be in a big hurry to join. What's important is to do what God says. If you have a job, keep it 'til God tells you to do something else. Jesus set you free from all the trips that men try to drop on you, so don't sell out to any of them. Stay where you are with your marriage partner and everything else until God puts you in a different place.

People who haven't been married yet probably shouldn't get married because of what's coming down. Of course, like we said before, if you are married, stay together. But if you aren't, don't go lookin'. It isn't wrong to get married, but it's better to be free from the problems married people are gonna have. The point is, the time before Jesus comes back is getting short. Those who are married should use their time like they

aren't! There isn't time to be messing with the world system and the plastic emotions it lives on. That whole thing is going to be wiped out soon anyway. Just be free from the world's hang-ups. If you aren't married, you can live all your life just for Jesus; married people owe a lot of responsibility to each other. We're not saying that to keep you from getting married. We're just trying to help you put as much time as possible in for Jesus.

If two people are thinking about getting married and their heads are screwed up about their desires for each other, they should get married — there's nothing wrong with that. People who can control their desires and know they shouldn't get married are better off single. So if you decide to get married — cool. If you decide not to get married, that's even better.

Husband and wife belong together as long as they live. If a woman's husband dies, she's free to marry again if the man knows Jesus. But remember, she'd probably be happier if she stayed single.

Now about the things some of you are still doing that are related to the trips you were into before you met Jesus — like horoscopes, peace symbols, witches' trinkets, etc. We know that you know how to handle these things in your own lives, but knowing you're together and bragging about it doesn't help out the family at all. God says it's love, not knowledge, that builds His body. Anybody that thinks he knows all the answers still has a lot to learn; but if we love God, His Spirit will teach us.

As far as fooling around with these symbols of the things you were into is concerned, we know the truth and we know that there is only one God. We know that wearing a peace symbol or an ankh or reading the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* or the daily horoscope is not going to separate you from Jesus. There are a lot of so-called "spiritual" beings and powers around, but for us there is only one God, the Father; everything comes from Him. And there's only one real Leader — that's Jesus. He made everything and gave us life for-

ever. The problem is, not all the brothers and sisters know this. For some of them, these symbols are *real* — vitally connected with the beings and powers they represent, and that's the association they make every time they see them. They see things as dangerous threats to their faith and it hurts them when they see a sister or brother messing with them. Now, playing with things like toys doesn't have anything to do with your relationship with God, and you don't lose anything if you fool with them or leave them alone. But be sure your freedom in these things doesn't mess up the heads of brothers and sisters who aren't that strong. So suppose that a weaker sister or brother sees you fooling around with these "toys," digs it because he sees you as an example, and does it himself. He feels guilty, and your freedom has turned into a wall between him and Jesus. When you hurt a brother like this, you're going against Jesus yourself. You wouldn't hurt a brother or a sister for a few head games, would you?

The apostle Paul, one of the first leaders of the sisters and brothers after Jesus went back to the Father, is a great example of just what we've been rapping about. He was a special leader. He was a full citizen in a society in which most men were slaves. He had seen Jesus. A lot of people met Jesus through him. And although some people didn't think he was a special leader, those he introduced to Jesus *knew* that he was. Their very presence in the family proves it.

As a special leader he had a right to ask the brothers and sisters to give him his meals. He also had a right to have a wife and take her with him; many of the other early leaders did. As a spiritual leader he had a right to let others do the work while he did the teaching. A sailor on a fishing boat gets to eat some of the fish he catches. A farmer eats some of the grain he grows and drinks the milk from his cows. This not only follows human reasoning but it's God's law, set down in the Old Testament. It goes something like "You shall not muzzle an ox while he's grinding the grain." God wasn't

talking about oxen. He was talking about people. People who plant and people who harvest should both expect to get some of the grain. So when Paul planted spiritual seed, he had the right to expect material help to live on. But even though he had more right than any other brother to expect this, he didn't exercise this right. Paul did it that way so that nobody could say it was a cop-out way to make a living and use that as an excuse to turn away from Jesus. Just the same, you should know that God said that anybody who spreads the Good News should get their living from it. And yet Paul was constantly concerned with only one thing — getting out the Good News without getting involved in hassles over side issues.

Look, we're telling you this to show you that even though Paul was a free man, yet he gave up all of his rights for Jesus. This is his reason for doing it. You see he felt that spreading the Good News was not a choice of his own but something that God was *making* him do. He didn't see himself as deserving pay for it but as deserving punishment if he didn't do it. He saw his reward as being able to offer the Good News free. And he took the freedom that he himself had and turned it into slavery to all men. With the Jews he acted like a Jew to help the Jews come to Jesus. With other people who thought they had to obey the Jewish laws, he lived under that system of law (even though he didn't have to) to bring them to see Jesus. When he was with people who didn't pay attention to that system of law, he acted just like they did (except that he always kept the law of love) because he wanted them to know Jesus. In other words, Paul communicated spiritual truth to people at their level of spiritual awareness. And all this for one reason — he wanted to have a part in getting the Good News out.

It's kinda like a runner on a track team. He conditions his body, eats right, and puts out all he has in a race — all for a dumb trophy. So Paul poured himself all out to tell others about Jesus. It didn't matter to him what

he had to sacrifice — working for Jesus was all that counted.

Okay, now we hope you realize that sometimes we have to give up some things for the love of our sisters and brothers. But there's one more danger we want to warn you about. Maybe your faith really is strong enough to allow you to play around with the symbols of things you were into before you knew Jesus, but there are examples from the past which show that you can't count on it. Like the Old Testament book of Numbers tells us of some people who had been guided by and protected by God's presence, had put themselves willingly under the law God gave to Moses, had all eaten the same food that God gave them supernaturally when they were in the desert where no food grew and drank water in that same desert thru a rock which God gave them and which flowed like a fountain symbolizing the Messiah Himself. Even after God had given them all this, they still turned their backs on Him. Some of them shined on the food God gave them. Some of them worshiped idols. Later, some of the young guys got to digging on chicks who worshiped idols and ended up doing the same trip with them. Others tested God to see how far they could go. And others just plain complained about the way God was leading them. A lot of them died as a result of all these things because they just weren't fit to represent God. What happened was recorded to show us that if you think you're so strong, watch out, because it's easier than you think to mess yourself over. Keep your head straight. God won't let anything be thrown in front of you that would make you go away from Himself. Because He loves you and takes care of you, He'll always make a way for you to keep in touch with Him, and He'll help you stay away from hassles that would bust up your relationship.

So, brothers and sisters, don't let anything get between you and God. You're hep enough to know what we're sayin'. Like the cup of wine that we share together when we're remembering Jesus gives us a common bond in

Him. And the bread we eat at the same time shows our place together in His family — we are His body. When you take part in a religious worship you become a part of that religion, and you can't be into religion and into Jesus too. When you get into things with demons you're really going against God. It's got to be one or the other.

We are free to do anything, but some things don't help us and build us up. Because of Jesus we are totally free, but some things you do can really mess you and the brothers and sisters over. So don't go after just what *you* really dig on, but think about what other people need.

If someone turns you on to an interesting trinket or book, go ahead and enjoy it. Don't worry about its religious significance. Dig it! "The earth is the Lord's and everything that's in it belongs to Him" (Psalm 24:1). On the other hand, if somebody tries to turn you on to something that he says "beats this Jesus trip," turn it down — for his sake and yours too. Here's how it comes out: Anything I can thank God for is all right, but anything that will hurt me or someone else, I'd better turn down. Everything we do should bring honor to God. Avoid doing things just to feed your own ego trip, and make sure that your love is so right that you put others (family and nonbelievers both) ahead of yourself. That's what being like Jesus is all about.

Now about relationships between men and women. Women who are married are subject to the leadership of their husbands. Women who are not married are subject to no men, but only to Jesus. All men are subject to Jesus and Jesus, as Son, is subject to God, His Father. Women who try to be just like men in terms of leadership and responsibility are making a big mistake and their heads are going to be hurt by it. Man was created before woman and woman was created for man. But remember, man is born from woman. We are all equal in the sight of God as far as subjection to Him is concerned. Men, in exercising the leadership role

God has given them, must remember this and their responsibility for the loving care of their wives.

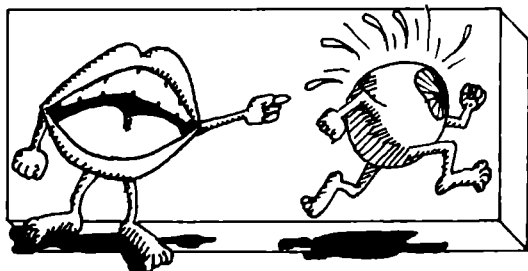
Another thing to be careful about is cliques among the sisters and brothers. Remember earlier we talked about all the hassles over ideas within the family. When it comes right down to living life like Jesus wants us to live it, there are too many contradictions in this type of conduct. Just think for a minute about how we remember Jesus and His death. The same night Judas copped out on Him, He took a loaf of bread, thanked God for it, broke it, and told His followers, "This broken loaf of bread symbolizes My body which will be broken for you. When you get together in the future, break a loaf and eat it to remember Me by." Then He took a cup of wine and said, "This cup symbolizes the new agreement made between you and God by My blood being shed for you. When you get together, drink a cup to remember Me."

Every time you eat bread and drink wine like that you're remembering that Jesus died to make you *one body* that He's coming back for. If when you eat and drink at those times you don't think about the meaning of His death for you, you're in fact becoming guilty of His death. That's why we should lay out our hearts before God to get ready to eat the bread and drink the wine at those times. Because some of you are not thinking about the forgiveness which His death means for you, there are brothers and sisters who are spiritually weak and sick and some are just plain spiritually asleep. If we really paid attention to His death and its meaning for us, this wouldn't be happening. But when we do this and allow Him to communicate with us, He corrects us and cleans up our lives. So act like the body you are, not just when you're sharing the Lord's supper, but always.

Now about the spiritual problems that keep coming down. We don't want you brothers and sisters to be in the dark about this. Before you knew Jesus you were misled by the false teachings of many other religions.

No one is led by God's Spirit to hate Jesus. And no one gives Jesus first place in his life unless he is led by God's Spirit.

There are a lot of different kinds of spiritually given abilities, but it's the same Holy Spirit that gives them to us. There are a lot of different ways of using these abilities, but it's the same Jesus who gives us each our work to do. And the effects of what we're led to do vary, but it's the same Father who brings the results. Each person's spiritually given abilities have been given to him by the Spirit for the common good of everybody. God's Holy Spirit works through *each* of the brothers and sisters for the good of the whole family. To some people He gives the ability to run down how spiritual principles are applied to living; to someone else He gives the ability to learn and explain things about the Bible; to another the same Spirit gives a large amount of faith; to another a spiritual ability to heal people. To someone else He gives the power to do miracles; to another He gives a special ability to explain what God wants in the lives of His people; to another He gives the ability to speak in a language he doesn't know; and to another the ability to translate those unknown languages. But it's God's Spirit that does all these, giving each of us the abilities we should have and the ways of using them for the common good.



It's like the human body has many parts to it but is still a unit — one organism. Just the same way, God's forever family is a single body. We are made a part of it by His Spirit, regardless of what kind of people we are, and we all have His Spirit in us. Like can you dig this: The foot says, "I'm not a hand like I want to be, so I'm not gonna be part of the body!" Does that separate it from the body? Or, if the ear says, "If I can't be an eye, I'm not gonna be part of this body!" Does that change anything? Like, what if the *whole* body was an eye, how would it hear? And if it was an ear, how would it smell? But God put each part of the body in a certain place to do a certain thing, just the way He wanted it. And if every part were alike, there wouldn't be any body; it's their differences which fit together to make a body. Dig — how can an eye say to a hand, "I don't need you!"? And what good would it do for the head to say to the feet, "I don't need you!"? The parts of the body that seem to be the least important often turn out to be the most necessary; and the ones which seem to be the least desirable end up needing more attention; the parts which seem ugly have a deeper beauty in the work they do, while the good-looking parts may not be nearly so important to life. But God has put the body together and has given the parts that seem unimportant the biggest work to do so that the body will work together as a unit and all the parts will take care of each other. So if one part hurts, all the other parts hurt with it; and if one part is really happy, the other parts share a common joy.

Now just like that, you are the body of Jesus and each one of you has a share in how the world sees Him. And in the family God has set apart certain people to travel and spread the Good News, others to explain God's Word, others to teach, others to be miracle workers, healers, helpers, administrators, and some to speak in languages they have never learned. Is everybody a traveler? Is everybody able to explain God's Word? Are all of us able to teach? Are we all miracle workers? Does everybody have the spiritual ability to

heal others? Can we all speak in languages we never learned? Can we all translate such languages? We should all have the best of the spiritually given abilities the Spirit has for us.

But there is something more important than any of them.

If I was the best speaker in the world — even if I could speak and sound like an angel — it would all be just a bunch of noise if I wasn't wrapped up in God's love. Even if I really could know everything and could foretell the future and have enough trust in God to move mountains around, if I don't have His love in me I don't amount to anything. If I give away everything I own and even if I give my own life to some martyr trip and don't have God's love in me, I haven't gained a thing.

If God's love is controlling you, you will be patient and kind. You won't get jealous, won't brag about yourself, you won't be thinking about impressing people, won't have to grab at places of importance or go after things for yourself. You won't get upset by what people say and do to you or get hassled up at people who burn you.

If you're being controlled by God's love, you'll be hurt to see people rip off others and you'll really be happy when things which are true and right happen.

God's love can take anything that's thrown at it; it never stops trusting and never gives up hope; it just never quits. In fact, man, when everything else is smashed, God's love still stands.

If you have the God-given ability to know His will and purpose, it will pass away. If you can rap in unknown languages, far-out, but someday all God's children will speak the same language. And the things we know will someday appear stupid in the face of the real truth. What we know and experience now is so far short of the truth, and what we say shows it. When Jesus comes back and everything is perfect, we won't need these inadequate things.

When we were babies, we babbled like babies — we thought and reasoned at that level. But as we grew up, we moved to higher levels. Just like that, right now we see and know only a little bit of what God is like. But when Jesus comes we'll see Him like He is — face to face. We only know a fraction of what He'll show us. Then we'll understand His whole universe just like He knows us now.

There are three things that we have to have in our life with Jesus here — faith, hope, and love — but love is the most important of the three.

Make knowing and showing God's love your real aim as individuals. And then as a group you should want to have the spiritual abilities used among you — but especially the ability to know and understand what God wants to have happen in the lives of His people. When someone speaks in an unknown language he only builds himself up, but one who explains God's Word builds up the whole family.

It would be nice if we all had the spiritual ability to speak in unknown languages, but we don't. What we really need is the spiritual ability to explain God's Word. Someone who explains God's Word does something a lot more important than the person who talks in a strange language, unless of course that person runs down to the whole family what he was praising God about.

So if we come around you talking in a strange language, it's no big help to you unless we also show you some things from God's Word or teach you. Like if every musical instrument ever made played only one note (say middle C), where would music come from? And if a fire alarm didn't come on strong the firemen would never make it to a fire. And unless you talk in words that people can understand, they'll never know what you've got to say 'cause you'll just be filling the air with noise.

Like there are a lot of different languages in the world and they all mean something to somebody, but if some

dude raps to you in a language you don't understand then you're gonna be strangers to each other.

So wow, if your heart is really into having spiritual abilities, go after the ones that will build up the brothers and sisters. Someone who speaks in a strange language should ask God to make him able to tell the brothers and sisters what it is all about.

If we talk to the Father in an unknown language, it's our spirits that are talking to Him — our minds don't understand what we're saying. What should we do about it? We should talk to the Father with our spirits *and* our minds. We should sing with our spirits *and* our minds. If you talk to the Father in an unknown language, how can people in a group who don't have your spiritual ability agree with you in your praise for God? Sure, you're praising Him, but you're not helping other people. Like the apostle Paul said, and he used this special ability more than about anybody, "When I'm with the brothers and sisters I'd rather say five words they can understand and be taught by than ten thousand words in a language they don't understand."

Grow up in your thinking, sisters and brothers. Be innocent like children but wise in spiritual things. Like God says in the Old Testament, "Through strangers and strange languages I will speak to these people and they still won't listen to what I'm saying." Speaking in unknown languages is a sign used by God for unbelievers, so when the family comes together there's no need for everybody to be using this spiritual ability. As a matter of fact, if you do and somebody who doesn't know Jesus or someone who hasn't seen these things before comes in, he'll think you're just a bunch of spaced people. On the other hand, the spiritual ability to explain the Word of God is meant to be used for the help of brothers and sisters. And if everybody uses what he has of it when you're together and someone who doesn't know Jesus or someone who doesn't know about these things comes in, it'll get to him and show him what he's like inside and he'll worship God because he'll see Him in you.

Well then, brothers and sisters, when you get together sing, teach, explain God's Word, speak in the languages God gives you and interpret them; let everything that's done be done to build up the whole family. If anyone speaks in an unknown language it shouldn't be done by more than two or at the most three people, one at a time, and there should be someone there to translate it and tell the brothers and sisters what it means. If there's no one there to translate, then this special ability should not be used in public, but only between that person and God. Let two or three explain God's Word while the others listen and think over what's said. If God gives someone in the group something special to say, then let the others be quiet while he raps. That way you all get a turn to tell what God's been teaching you, and everybody can learn and get help. If you have a message from God, you can wait your turn or even hold off till another time if you need to. God doesn't want a big noisy hassle among the brothers, but peace. The sisters shouldn't teach when the brothers and sisters are together because God has said that they are to be taught and guided by the men.

The things that we have run down here are really true as God has taught them. If you disagree, you should go to God's Word and find for yourself that it is true. The main thing is, we should all long to be able to explain God's Word plainly to other people and not run around saying that it's wrong to use any of God's gifts. But remember to do everything in a good and orderly way.

And now, brothers and sisters, we'd like to rap to you about some of the good things that the Good News involves. Remember that it was what brought you into God's forever family — unless you've never really believed it at all, and if that's true you're still separated from Him. You learned how Jesus died for your selfish lives just like the Old Testament prophets said He would. And He came back to life again just like they

said He would, too. Can you dig that? And it wasn't just an abstract concept either. Like He was seen by Peter and the rest of His close followers. After that more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters saw Him at one time. Several others saw Him later, and even after He had gone back to be with the Father He showed Himself to the apostle Paul in a vision. To Paul that was really a big thing after all he had done to mess over the brothers and sisters. He saw himself unworthy of all the things the Father had done for him. God's kindness and love made him work harder than any of the other brothers in leading God's people in those days. Remember, though, it wasn't him, but God's Spirit working in him, that did it all. The same thing's true for you. It isn't who works the hardest; the important thing is that the Good News is spread around — and you believe it!

Now, the guts of the Good News is that Jesus actually came back to life after He was physically dead; and if that's where it's at, how can some of you question whether or not there is life after death? If there isn't, then Jesus is still dead. And if He's still dead, the Good News is just another wasted trip, and so is your faith and trust in God. And all of us who go around telling about it are liars because we say Jesus came back from the dead, and if that doesn't happen, He didn't, and He's still dead. If that's the way it is, you're a fool to trust God to save you and you're still guilty for everything you've done; all those who have died believing are just rotting in their graves. If our hope in the Promised Liberator is just good for this life, then we're the most out-of-it people on the face of the earth!

But Jesus *did* come back after they killed Him. Of all the people God is going to someday bring back to life, He was the first. Death first came to people because of one man — Adam. But new life forever also came through one man — Jesus. All people are gonna die like Adam, but all people who know Jesus will be made alive again like He was. This is the way it goes: Jesus was first; then when He comes for us, all those who

have received Him will come back to life again. Then, at the end of time as we know it, He'll give the family over to the Father, having liberated His people from every other form of authority and rule. He has to be in control until all His enemies are gone, and the last one to go will be death itself. When all of that is over, He'll give Himself to the Father and take His place as Son; and God, who won the victory, will be seen by all as All.

If these things aren't true, why should we place ourselves in front of people who hate us? Why should brothers and sisters in repressive societies be giving up their lives for Jesus? Dig it! Why should we, in our lives with Jesus, die daily to self? Why take chances on not getting all we can out of life? Yep, if the dead don't rise, "let's get stoned and forget it."

Don't let people who talk like that fool you. They'll drag you down on their trips if they can. Get straight and stop messing with God. Man, some of these people don't know God at all and it's a shame for you to listen to them.

Now somebody's going to come down on you and ask, "If people come back from the dead how's it gonna happen and what are they gonna look like?" OK, jiver, why don't you *think* once? Plant some seeds. What comes up? The same seeds you planted? Of course not, fool! They have to die and what comes up is something different. You put a dried up little seed in the ground and God brings something green up — apple trees from apple seeds, rose bushes from rose seeds, etc. People and birds and fish and animals have different kinds of bodies. Also, angels have different bodies than people and each is beautiful in its own way. And the sun and the moon and the stars are all different and each of them is beautiful in its own way too. So dig it! Our bodies which are going to die and rot are different from the ones we'll have when we come back to life again. Those bodies will never die. So the bodies we have now will be "planted" in death only to be raised to new life; "planted" in weakness and raised

to new life in God's power. At the time of death they are just lifeless human bodies, but when they come back to life they will be supernatural forever bodies — the second exists just as surely as does the first. Just like the first man, Adam, was given a living human body, the last Adam, Jesus, brought the life-giving spirit. So, we've got our human bodies and someday God will give us new supernatural bodies. God made Adam's body out of natural elements just like what the earth's made of. But He remade Jesus' body in heaven. We're all made of the same stuff Adam was, but those of us who know Jesus will be remade with a body just like His. Our bodies now reflect the earth, but someday our new bodies will reflect heaven.

Dig it, sisters and brothers, these flesh and blood bodies can't be part of God's forever nation — they aren't built to last. But here's a secret that you can't forget: we won't all die but we all will have new bodies. And when we have those brand-new bodies, the Old Testament prophecy will finally be true for us all just like it was for Jesus, "Death is swallowed up in victory! O death, where is your sting? Where is your victory!" Death's barb is slavery to wrong and its powerful constant reminder is the law. But thank You, Jesus, You gave us the victory! So, brothers and sisters, stand! Be strong; don't get messed over; work hard for Jesus 'cause nothing you do for Him will be wasted.

P.S. Don't forget to share your bread with the brothers and sisters who need it. A good way to do it is to save what you don't need yourself and give it to them when something comes up.

Keep your eyes open. Keep the faith. Don't get caught in people's trips. Be strong and do everything in love. Maranatha! Right on! Jesus' love be with you all.

Letter 3

**"We don't live for ourselves anymore, but for the
one who died and rose again for us."**

—II Corinthians 5:15

Letter 3

Dear brothers and sisters in Sin City (and anyone else who gets ahold of it). This is another letter from your brothers called by God to share in the streets the Good News about Jesus the Messiah. We're trusting the Father and His Son Jesus to drop peace and His loving-kindness on you.

One of the things we want to rap about in this letter is the hassles that are always coming down on people because they belong to Jesus. It's really far out to see how the Father, in His kindness, keeps giving us His comfort and strength by the life of His Spirit inside us. He does this so that when the bad times come we can pour out that same comfort and strength to the rest of the family around us. The more we get into the suffering of God's Son, the more He pours out the comfort and the strength we need. So when you get it rough, the result is that you get enough comfort and strength to spread to every life you touch.

You gotta know, brothers and sisters, that there are members of the forever family in other places around the world who have it a whole lot worse than you do. Listen, man, they're being thrown in the slams, beaten and tortured, and in general getting it put to 'em more than what they as human beings can take. That's going down *right now* and they're doing it for Jesus. Some of them have lived under a death sentence and learned not to trust themselves but the Father who raises up people from the dead. Talking to brothers and sisters who have been through that, you see how they had to trust the Father for life itself everyday. Jesus said that His family would have to share in His sufferings, and they are taking the heaviest share of the load for us. The *least* we can do is talk to the Father about their needs.

We also want to get into the need to trust each other. Knowing how uncertain this world is and that sisters and brothers need to be following the leading of His

Spirit all the time, we shouldn't be hurt if they can't always do what they say they will. Know this: The reason we can trust each other is because everyone who is really in the family belongs to God. When we received Jesus, the Father put His Spirit in us as a pledge of all He has for us. We can trust each other because we trust Him. He has His time and His way in dealing in each of our lives. He doesn't use the world's politics and motives in the lives of His people but gives us Godly honesty and together heads. When a brother or sister promises to be somewhere at a certain time and doesn't make it, trust that one to the Father. Don't get suspicious of motives. But talk to the Father and trust Him to do as He pleases.

Remember in our first letter to you we wrote about how to deal with people who were misusing God's gift of sex? We told you to put them out of the close fellowship of the brothers and sisters. That was a hard thing to say. It hurt us and it probably hurt you more. But that sort of thing is really bad for the family. Now we're thinking about the people you put out and wondering if they've learned their lesson. If they have, forgive them, comfort them, and bring them back. Once they've seen their wrong and changed their way, it can only hurt them and make them bitter and frustrated to leave them out of the fellowship. So show that you love them and care for them. We can't afford to let Satan outsmart us; forgiveness comes from the Father.

Wherever you are and whatever you do, keep open to the leading of God's Spirit. Jesus shows the whole world by our work for Him that He has taken people who were His enemies and remade them into His children. God is using us to make the Good News filter through the world's air like sweet-smelling incense. To those who are receiving Jesus it smells like life. To those turning away from Him it smells like death. We don't need letters of recommendation for the work we're doing for Him. The proof is the results in the lives of

people. We can say that because we trust His work and not because we're sure any of us are all that good at getting the message across. He is the One who makes us able to relate the new agreement to people. And remember, that agreement isn't a list of laws to follow, but a relationship with His Spirit. The law just traps you like a lid on a coffin. God's Spirit gives you life.

Remember when Moses came down the mountain with the Ten Commandments written on stone? His face showed that he got it from the Father because his face actually was shining so brightly that God's children couldn't even look at him. But the shine on his face faded away, just like the law he carried. How much more should our faces shine, and continue to shine, because of the law of life in the Spirit that we carry in our hearts. Now if the plan that condemns every man (the law) came with a brightness that people could see, think of the brightness of the plan that makes us right with the Father. In the light of a relationship with Jesus, the law looks like a candle in the sunshine. The thing is that plan faded out, but the light of the new agreement is forever.

Knowing that, we can be out front with our message, not hiding our light like Moses did because it was fading away. Actually the minds of the Jews were so imprisoned by their slavery to the law that they never understood what it was all about — and they still don't. The light of the Son shows everything for what it is, so if the Jews turned to Him they would see both the law and the Good News for what they are. The only road to freedom and liberty is the Spirit of God. All of us who have Him in our hearts are free and can see Him changing our lives. When we look at each other, it's like seeing Jesus in a mirror.

Now that we know Him and have been called to share Him, let's not give up. We don't have to play phony games. Just lay the Good News out for what it is — the Truth. That way you don't have to worry about what

anybody's going to think about you. If people can't accept the truth for what it is, it's because they're dying. These are the people that Satan has blinded so they can't see the true light of Jesus, God's Son. That's where it's at, because remember we're not into going around talking about ourselves, but about Jesus, our Leader. The Father who created light has put His light in our hearts in the person of His Son so that we can teach men trapped in darkness.

The Father is using our soon-to-die bodies so that the world will know that the power of the Good News is from Him and not from us. Because we know it's Him and not us, we're up against the wall but not smashed, hassled but not quitting, messed over but not deserted, knocked down but not out. Everyday we die a little bit of Jesus' death, but we show His life, too. As long as we live our lives are going to be on the line for Jesus, so people can see His life and not ours. And when they do, our death results in their life. Whatever comes down, we trust the Father to take care of us; so we do like it says in Psalms, "I believe it, so I'm gonna say it." We have got to know that even if we get offed, the Father is going to raise us up just like He did Jesus so the family will be together with Him — forever. Keep on working so that more and more people will be thanking the Father until the day Jesus comes back for us.

Don't give up. While our bodies die a little more every day, our spirits are being pumped with new life. What's coming down now won't last long and won't hurt much compared to the joy of that day when the family will all be together. Don't bother yourself with the things you can see and touch. They're all going to waste away anyway. Get behind your relationship with the Father because that's what's going to last forever.

We know that if our body gets ripped off, the Father has a new one waiting for us. We shouldn't be afraid of that happening. As a matter of fact, we should hurt waiting for this to happen because the bodies He's got

waiting for us are so much better than the ones we've got now. The Father has done this for us and He's given us His Spirit to prove it. Dig it, as long as you're stuck in this body, you're not with Jesus. So trust Him and look forward to going home. So let's be into doing what He wants wherever we are. Everything else will be worthless the day we stand in front of Him.

There's a respect we have for Jesus that makes us want other people to know Him. When we realize His love in our hearts, we don't have any choice. Dig it! We know that He died so that we could all live with Him forever. We're all dead to our old lives, too. We don't live for ourselves anymore but for the One who died and rose again for us. We shouldn't be looking at brothers and sisters by the standards of the world's system but according to what Jesus is doing in their lives. When a person comes to know Jesus, all that old trash drops off and he's got a whole new life started. It all comes from the Father who makes us right with Himself through His Son Jesus and gives us the work of telling others about how they can have new life too.

Can you dig it? We are the personal representatives of the living God begging people to accept His free gift of love and forgiveness. And what we have to tell them is a real mind blower: The Father took His Son, who never had any evil in Him, and laid all the evil of the universe on Him so that all of His goodness and purity could be laid on us.

Don't brush it off people! We don't dare take that much love lightly. Remember what the Father said:

When the time was right, I listened to you.

And when you needed help, I found you.

Right now is the time when God offers people life in His forever family. Let's live so that we don't get in their way.

Giving ourselves to the Father's work is going to mean a lot of hurt. It's going to mean learning to put up with hurt, hassles, bad times, beatings, jailings; and it's going to mean facing mobs, working hard, going without sleep, going without food. We'll have to do it.

all the time holding on to a standard of purity, wisdom, patience, kindness, and God's love, all by the power of His Spirit. Our only weapons are right standing with God, His perfect truth, and His power. Some people will say we're good and some will say we're bad. Some will praise us and some will criticize us. And though we tell the truth, some will say we're liars. Even if we're nobodies in the world's system, the Father knows us. While dying, we are still alive; pushed around but not put to death; sad but always happy; poor while making many rich; owning nothing but possessing everything worthwhile.

In our other letter to you we rapped about being where people are at for the purpose of spreading the Good News. But there's a difference between being with them and being into their thing. Now we just ran down the hard life cut out for us as followers of Jesus. We'd like to warn you that an easy way to lose sight of your objective is to get hung up in an unbeliever's bag. Like what do good and evil have in common? And how do you put light and darkness together? Could there be any agreement between Jesus and the Devil? How could there be any agreement between God's house and a house of idols? And dig it, you *are* God's house. The Old Testament says:

I'll live in them and be with them.

I will be their God and they will be my people.

Don't be hung up in the world's system,

and don't grab at its filthy stuff.

Come to me and I'll welcome you.

I'll be your Father and you'll be My children.

Wow! With a promise like that, why should it be hard for us to stay clean?

Sometimes we have to tell each other about wrong things in our lives. And it hurts to have a brother or sister tell us where we've been messin' up. We might resent it, might be afraid, might want to prove they're wrong and we're right, might want to split. But the

Father's way is for us to face it, look at it with the eyes of His Spirit, admit where we are wrong, and let Him change it. That's a way He keeps us clean. So in the end the thing that is hard for our brother or sister and hurts us makes us more like Jesus.

Another thing that is important is how we handle the bread God lays on us. He gave us His Son and adopted us into His family, so everything we have now really comes from Him. As His children and His personal representatives, we should put everything we have, including our very lives, into His work in the world. When we do, His Spirit brings us true happiness. Even sisters and brothers who are living on the edge of starvation get great joy out of sharing what little they have. The Father wants us to have an overflowing faith, to be able to talk about Him, to understand what's going down around us, to work hard, to be loving and kind to people. But He also wants us to be laying out the stuff we "own" for the use of people who need it.

For that to happen, your giving has to get further than your head. You've got to be into doing it all the time. God wants all His people to have enough. And the reason you sometimes have more than you need is so you can have the joy of serving your brothers and sisters. Like the Old Testament says, "The one who got a lot didn't have too much and the one who got a little had plenty."

Sometimes because we're human even our good intentions get messed up. We need help in spreading our bread around. You may have to appoint somebody to gather together the extra stuff and pass it around where it's needed. But be careful not to get into the bag of telling people how much or how little they're supposed to give. The Father takes care of that and everyone should decide himself. He's already said, "Sow sparingly; reap sparingly. Sow generously; reap gener-

ously." From there it's between the Father and the individual. If we're open to Him, we won't want to hold back, and He wants to see us really open up. He isn't going to ask us to give anything He hasn't already given us. "He spread the wealth; He gave to the poor. His goodness lasts forever." (Psalm 112:9). When we give like this, it not only takes care of the needs of the brothers and sisters, but it also brings a load of thanks to the Father because people praise Him for your obedience and your generosity.

What else is there to say? Follow the example of our Father who gave us the greatest gift of all when He gave us His Son to bring us into His family forever!

Another thing that comes up is what comes down. We have to walk around this earth and do God's work in our weak human bodies. But let's remember there's a spiritual war going on and our bodies don't have any weapons to fight in that kind of a war. There's no use using programs and methods that come out of the world system. The weapons that work belong to the Father's spiritual nation. They aren't guns or bombs or anything else that man can make but they're the only things that can knock down the Devil's barricaded forts. They smash every proud argument aimed at God and every fence built to keep men from knowing Him. His weapons are able to examine and change the wills of people — something we can't even touch. So dig where our confidence is at.

We don't have to be concerned about how great we look in men's eyes. The Father has a plan for each one of us in building up His family. He gives us the work to do and He's the One that does it. Suppose somebody else gets the credit for what you do. There's no problem. The Father did it so you give Him the credit, no matter where other people try to put it. Our whole aim should be to build up the family, not to have something to brag about. Like Jeremiah wrote, "If anyone brags, he should brag about God." After all, it isn't what a

man says about himself, it's what God says about him.

Who we are, what we've done, or what we've been through don't make us any better than anybody else. A lot of brothers and sisters have been through real hard times. Some have been thrown in jail, starved, frozen, and all kinds of bad things. So don't feel too abused yet. What we have to do is learn to hurt for people. Forget about yourselves. And if you have a hurt or a hassle that keeps on bugging you, even after you ask the Father a lot of times to take it away, well thank Him for it. The apostle Paul had that kind of a problem. God told him, "I'm not going to take it away, but I'm with you and that's all you need. My strength really shows itself when you're too weak to do anything on your own." So be proud of your weaknesses. They show off what Jesus can do rather than what you can do. Since you can't handle them, you learn to trust Jesus so you can even enjoy weaknesses, hurts, bad times, and insults for Jesus sake. So dig it! When you are weak, then you are strong.

But look out! Be sure of where you're putting your trust when hard times come. Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. People are going to be coming around claiming that God sent them and that He gave them some message for you. Keep your heads straight because these phonies can be as tricky as their father the Devil. Don't be taken by people who come talking about another Jesus or telling you about another way to be right with the Father or who are into a thing about some spirit other than God's Holy Spirit who is already in you. It might sound like an easy way out of your hassles, but it's just going to mess you over.

Remember that Jesus, our Liberator, was killed in a weak human body. But God's mighty power brought Him back to life. Now our bodies are weak and yet we, too, will live with Him in that same power. Don't cop

out. Stand up to the bad times. If you really belong to Jesus, He's in you. So live right, trusting Him. Use your weakness and His strength to grow up as mature members of the family.

Just a few last words, brothers and sisters. Be happy; get yourselves together; pay attention to what we said; get your heads in the same place; live in peace. Dig it! The God of love and peace lives in you.

Be warm and real when you see each other.

We're always asking Jesus, our Leader, to show you His loving-kindness and trusting that you'll keep on talking with His Spirit. The Father loves us all!

Letter 4

**“Brothers and sisters, stand! Stand and keep standing
in the liberty that Jesus has given us and don’t get
tangled up in slavery to the law again.”**

—Galatians 5:1

Letter 4

From brothers appointed by God the Father to share on the streets the Good News about Jesus the Messiah. To the brothers and sisters in Rulesboro. We'd like to wish you peace and love from God our Father — and from Jesus our Leader who died for our rotten ways so that the Father could rescue us from this rotting world system. Wow! Do we thank Him for that! Right on!

Now dig it! It blows our minds to think that you are copping out on the Father who called you to Himself and are picking up on a revision of the Good News that makes it *bad* news. These people who are hanging you up are distorting the Good News of Jesus the Messiah. Don't listen to them. If any "apostle" or even an angel comes around laying down anything but the true Good News, he ought to be damned by God. That's right! *Anybody* who does that ought to be *damned by God*!

Look! Don't let plastic brothers come around and tie you up in a bunch of phony rules. Remember, we are free children of the Father and not slaves in chains. We don't want people to get the idea that the way into His forever family is by following a set of rules. Ditch trips like that no matter who lays them on you, even if he's a big leader in the family.

A good example of this very thing is when the apostle Peter went to visit the apostle Paul in Antioch just after Jesus went back to be with the Father. When Peter first hit town he ate with the non-Jewish sisters and brothers who didn't pay any attention to Jewish laws at all. But along came a bunch of Jewish brothers from Jerusalem who were hung up in laws. He was so spooked by what they might say that he wouldn't have anything to do with his non-Jewish brothers and sisters anymore, and all of the other believing Jews played hypocrite right along with him. So Paul really got down on his case.

"You were born a Jew but you dropped these laws a long time ago — like the day you met Jesus. Now why try to lay'em on non-Jews? You and I both know you don't get right with God by following His laws but by trusting Jesus."

The Father showed us a long time ago, with His system of laws (the Ten Commandments, etc.), that we couldn't get to Him on the basis of what we do. Now if Jesus replaced that system by His death on the cross, let's not ruin ourselves by building up a new one. Dig it! God's law made me dead to all laws so that I could live for Him. You were killed with Jesus. It isn't you that's living anymore, but Jesus living in you. You have to realize that the life you're living in that body now is supposed to be one of trusting Him *every second*. Why not? He loves you so much He poured out His life for you. Don't waste His death. If we could get to the Father by keeping rules, then Jesus hung on that cross for nothing!

Oh, you messed up kids. Who has messed up your heads so you don't even know what's true anymore? You really had the picture of Jesus the Messiah crucified for you. Just answer one question: How did you get God's Spirit inside you? Was it by following a set of rules or was it by trusting Him? Come on, you know where it's at. Do you think that the new life God's Spirit started in you is going to grow on the basis of what *you* can do? Are you going to waste all the hard times you had in learning to trust Him? No way! When the Father pours out His Spirit in you and works miracles, does He do it because you follow a set of rules or because you trust Him?

Well, the Bible says Abraham believed God and that's what put Him in the Father's family. So the real children of Abraham are the members of God's forever family through simply trusting Jesus. That's why God said that through Abraham all the nations of the world would feel God's true joy. Even back then He was setting down

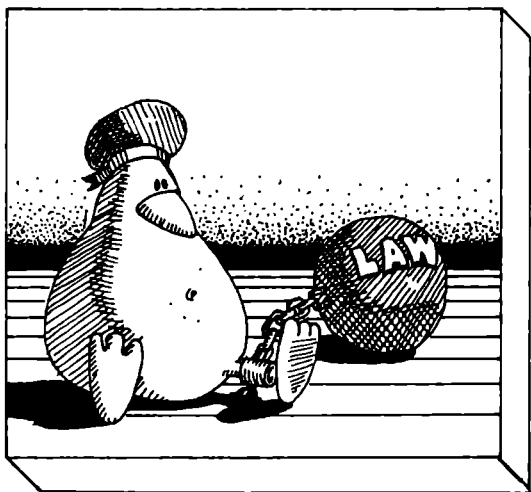
the fact that non-Jews would be part of the family. So only people that trust the Father get the relationship with Him that Abraham got. And people who try to be right with Him by following a set of rules are nowhere because the Bible says, "If you try to follow the law and blow it just once, you're damned." You gotta be blind to miss it: God doesn't accept anybody by what they do. The only way to be right with Him is by trusting Him. If you're following a set of rules, you're sure not trusting Him because you're trusting what you can do. Jesus rescued us from that trap by taking the damning we deserved by law. The Bible says, "Anybody that's hung on a tree is damned." So you can take your pick: Be damned yourself or accept life from the damning Jesus got. The Father's aim was that through trusting Jesus, and not by performing the law, Jews and non-Jews alike could have the relationship with His Spirit that He promised to Abraham.

Now suppose you make a contract with another person. Can somebody else come along and change it or add conditions to it? No, but can you dig this? God made a contract with Abraham that by trusting the Father and what He would do through Jesus, Abraham's spiritual children would have life forever with Him. Then God gave the law to Moses four hundred and thirty years later. Did that change God's contract with Abraham? Of course not. The conditions of God's contract with Abraham are still on the basis of trusting Him. So what makes you think you can be right with the Father by following His law or any other?

So what did God bother with the law for? It was added to make people see how far short they were of God's standard so they would *know* they couldn't have what He promised on their own. God used Moses as a go-between in giving the law to His people. But when God makes a promise, He doesn't need any man as a go-between. But that doesn't mean that the law contradicts the promise either. It's just that if the law had been able to give people life, then our right standing with the Father would have been based on how well

we kept the law. What the law does is to show every person how guilty of evil he is. But the gift of life comes by trusting Jesus.

So now we see what the law is all about. Before we trust Jesus, we're like a blind man who needs a guide dog to lead him (if you can dig it). But once we trust our lives to Him, we're like that blind man getting a brand-new pair of eyes — not needing the guide anymore. See, we become children of the Father when we trust Jesus. We become so totally identified with Jesus that it's like we wear Him — like clothes. In Jesus there are no "niggers" or "whiteys," no "freaks" or "straights," no male or female because we are all one in Him. If we belong to Jesus, then we're the true children of Abraham and members of the forever family, just like the promise said.



Whether you know it or not, until you received Jesus you were enslaved by law. When you met Him, you

were adopted as children of God, and, as children, you got His Spirit inside you in fellowship with your spirit. That makes us so close to the Father that we come to Him just like little children and say "Daddy." Our spirits aren't slaves to anything because we're God's very own children and everything He has belongs to us — that's the way He wants it.

Now like we said, before you knew Jesus you were under slavery to some kind of law. In other words, you were trying to please God by what you did. Now that you really know Him, what makes you want to go back to that old slavery? Do you think there is something you can do for the Father to make you more His child or make Him love you more? All He asks you to do is trust Him. If you do, then God will take care of everything He wants to have happen in your life.

You think you have to follow a set of rules to stay right with God? Well, dig this example; it's a true story. After God promised Abraham a son, he thought he had to take care of it himself. So he went to bed with Hagar, a slave woman, and they had a son. But God later gave him a son by direct promise through Sarah, his wife, a free woman. Hagar and her son were slaves. And the Jews, and everybody else, who think you have to follow a set of rules or laws to be right with God are bastards and slaves in God's eyes, just like Ishmael, Hagar's son. But those of us who are God's children by trusting Jesus are free in Him. And there's no need for us to return to slavery!

Just like the child born of Abraham's own efforts messed over the child born by God's promise, today people who believe in laws and rules mess over those of us who trust the Father. So God told Abraham to kick out Hagar and her son because that slave child was not to share in what was to be given to the free child. So, we are not slave children but free children!

Brothers and sisters, stand! Stand and keep standing

in the liberty that Jesus has given us and don't get tangled up in slavery to the law again.

Now dig it, people, 'cause we're gettin' it down right. Those of you who are depending on following some rule system to make yourself right with God do not belong to Jesus, and what He did hasn't helped you a bit. Anybody who puts himself under a pile of rules to be right with God *has to* follow God's *whole* law. You have put yourself out of range of God's loving-kindness in Jesus.

But by the power of God's Spirit we are trusting Jesus to make us right with the Father. In His family it isn't laws. It's just trusting the Father and serving each other in love.

Watch out for law trips — God isn't going to lead you that way. And He'll deal with anyone who tries to lay them on you, too. No matter what they say, you've still got freedom — not to mess each other over, but to serve each other in love. When it comes down to it, God's law adds up to just one thing: Love other people as much as you love yourself. If you bad mouth each other, you're going to hurt the whole family.

What we have to do is listen to God's Spirit and do what He says; then we won't be paying any attention to what our human nature tells us to do. There's a war going on between our human nature and His Spirit and that means you can't always do what you want to do. But the way to do that is not to build a system of laws but to trust His Spirit to lead you.

Look what your human nature gets you into: Abusing God's gift of sex, loving things, doping, hating, fighting, jealousy, blowing your cool, dividing the family, wanting to rip off other people, boozing, trashing — all that junk. Said it before — we'll say it again, life styles like that don't belong in the family. *But* when we let God's Spirit take charge in our lives, *He* produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, restraint. The law can't say anything against these things. And remember, if you belong to Jesus, that old human nature died on the cross with Him.

Now that we have the living connection with His Spirit, let's give our entire lives to His control. If we keep our eyes on Jesus, then we won't be trying to build our own reputations, competing with each other and making each other jealous.

If you catch one of your brothers or sisters doing something that's wrong, then those of you who are close to Jesus should go out of your way to help him get back, remembering that you can blow it too. That's the way we keep Jesus' law of love. If you think you're too cool to help out another person like this, then you're just burning yourself. Instead, take a look at your own life. If you're going to be getting down on anyone's case, get down on your own first. Nobody's perfect.

Put yourselves out for those God calls to teach you His word. Don't play games with God because nobody puts one over on Him. You pick the kind of crop you plant. If you plant seeds of selfishness, then you'll get the same kind of weeds back. But if you plant seeds of good works that the Spirit does in you, then He will make life out of them. So don't get discouraged about doing good. You will see the results if you don't quit. Keep on doing love to everybody — especially the brothers and sisters.

One last word about the pushers of the law. The only reason they're into what they're into is to make a reputation for themselves. All they want to do is build another religion so they won't get messed over for taking a stand on the truth of the Good News. They don't bother following *all* of God's laws. They just want you to follow the ones they pick so they can brag about you being in their bag. Brothers and sisters, we don't dare brag about *anything* except the cross of Jesus, our Liberator and Leader. Because of the power of that cross we are dead to anything the world system has to offer, and that world system is death to us. It doesn't matter what set of rules we follow or don't follow. All that matters is that we have new life through our living

connection with Jesus. If we live by this law, then we as a whole family will realize God's peace and loving-kindness.

Remember, there are brothers and sisters around the world whose scars for Jesus have taught them the meaning of their freedom from law. Get your head into that and keep trusting Him. Right on!

Letter 5

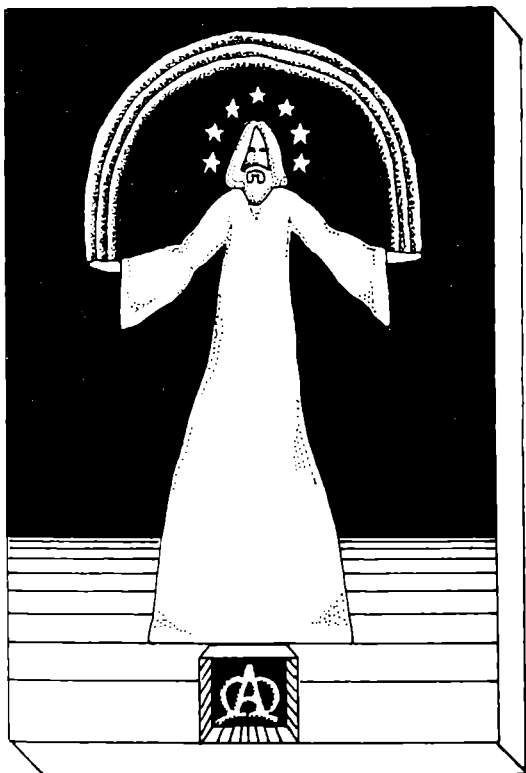
“One thing that we especially ask the Father is that
you will stand solid in His love and that you, along
with all brothers and sisters, will be able to understand
how wide, how deep, how long, and how high
the love of Jesus is.

—Ephesians 3:17.

Letter 5

Dear brothers and sisters who trust Jesus. This is a letter from brothers the Father chose to go around telling people about our Liberator and Leader.

We hope you are enjoying God's work in your life



and experiencing the inner peace He gives through Jesus.

We have just been sitting here praising God, the Father of Jesus our Leader, who has made all His wonderful goodness available to us because we belong to Jesus.

Can you dig it? Before He even made the world He picked us as His children, to be totally liberated from ourselves without blame for all the bad things we have done.

Covering us with His love, He adopted us to be His children through Jesus simply because He wanted to and was kind to us. We really need to be thanking Him for being so good and kind to us because we belong to Jesus. He showed all His goodness and kindness for us by bathing our spirits with the lifeblood of Jesus, letting His death make right all of the wrong in our hearts — even though we don't deserve it at all. His true wisdom is shown by His perfect understanding of us and His perfect care for our real needs.

You see, God wants us to understand His secret plan which He has had from the beginning and which He set forth through Jesus His Son. That plan is to get all His people together at the right time, putting Jesus in His true place in charge of everything in heaven and earth and demonstrating to His people the perfection and fulfillment that He has given them. Therefore, we have the privilege of being important to God because we fill a role which has been left open from the beginning — reserved for people like us who trust Jesus. Our satisfied existence as His children taking part in His plan for the universe brings Him heavy vibes of joy.

Besides that, those of us who have heard and believed and trusted the Good News of His liberation have been given His Spirit inside with our spirits just as He promised. The very fact that He is inside and we can talk with Him is proof that everything else He promises you as His child and heir will also happen. That is why we thank God whenever we think of your trust in Jesus and your love for the brothers and sisters. We also ask

God, the Father of Jesus our Liberator and Leader, to help you dig more of what is actually yours now and in the future because of what Jesus has done for you. We're asking Him to give you light to see more and more of the future He has called you to share — to see that He has joy forever because of your vital relationship with Him. We want you to understand, too, that the power which loves you and keeps you in relationship with God is the same power which created the universe and brought Jesus back to life from the dead — and put Him right beside the Father, far above any dictator, chairman, president, prime minister, or central committee. The honor which He has and you share is greater than anyone else in this world or any other world has ever had or ever will have. God has put everything under Jesus and made Him the head of God's family of believers, which is filled with Jesus Himself, the One who makes us complete.

Now that you are alive to God, having responded to His Son, remember that there was a time when your spirit was completely separated from His. You didn't know Him and you obeyed the spirit of this world (actually Satan) who is still directing those who have not received Jesus as their Liberator. It's really heavy to think that we were like that — doing whatever we wanted to, ignoring God's will — and didn't deserve to know Him. But God has been good to us, and even though we were slaves to ourselves with no hope of being free, He liberated us because of His love. He gave us real life in fellowship with Him. Our connection with Jesus means that we can already count on Heaven as being our home forever. As a matter of fact, whenever we talk with Him we are already there. And don't forget that we didn't get this life because we are so good. The power to make it happen comes from Jesus being raised from the dead, and God was good enough to use that same power to give us Life even though we don't deserve it at all. Can you dig it? You couldn't

ever have earned the right to be part of God's family. He gave it to you all on His own. So being one of God's children is nothing for you to brag about but just to be glad about. It's all God's doing, and any true good that comes out of your life in the future will be the result of your trust in Him, for God makes it possible for people made new by Jesus to do good for others.

It's also important to remember that you didn't start out as a member of God's family. Until you received Jesus as Liberator and Leader you were really a stranger to Him and His people! You didn't know about His agreements with those who trust Him, and you had no right to the results of those agreements. You didn't have anything to look forward to, and as far as you knew, death was the end of it all. But now you belong to Jesus as a member of the family, and the fact that you were so far away from God doesn't mean a thing.~

When Jesus died so long ago, the Father used the pouring out of His blood to wash our spirits clean of the evil for which we deserve death forever and separation from Him. He made it possible for people of all backgrounds, nations, and races who turn to Him to be at peace with one another — members of the same family. All of the barriers are broken down because all people who receive Jesus are made right with the Father and each other. His death for all of us has made the hatred between us go away. So the war between us is over and we can all be with the Father in the same Spirit.

Even though you may wander around and have no place on earth that you can call home, you aren't a stranger or an outsider to God. You are a member of His family, and you fit in your place in it. You might think of it like a house with the apostles and prophets being the foundation and Jesus being the cornerstone. All of us who have received Him are being joined together as parts of this building in which God lives by His Spirit.

It is because of this special relationship that we have been set aside by Jesus to bring the Good News to the street people. For a long time God's plan has been misunderstood by most people. But some of us understand it, and it really is quite simple: All people around the world have a right to come to the Father through His Son, and when they do, they have full rights as His children. This means that your race and your culture have nothing to do with it — God wants you as His child — He is proud of the family being built through Jesus, and He wants all the powers of the universe to see the wisdom of His plan for that family.

So, no matter what straight people may think of your looks and life style, it makes no difference to God, and you and I can talk directly with the Father because Jesus has made us part of the family. We ask Him to use His unlimited resources to make your spirit strong by His Spirit. We rap with Him about your need to know Jesus better — to talk with Him more and more inside your being, trusting Him for everything.

One thing that we especially ask the Father is that you will stand solid in His love and that you, along with all brothers and sisters, will be able to understand how wide, how deep, how long, and how high the love of Jesus is. Each of us needs to experience His love for ourselves, though we will never fully know it. It is through this experience of His love that we will be filled up with God Himself. We're really thankful that He is able to use His power within us to do more than we could ever ask or think. We want the whole universe to know how wonderful the Father has been in providing through Jesus such a wonderful plan of liberation for all of us.

Knowing what we know about our positions in His family, now and forever, we ought to live like God's children. Please be humble and gentle and patient. Your love should cause you to make allowance for one another — we all have faults. If we as members of God's

family aim to have solidarity in the Spirit, we will be at peace with each other and able to work together. We are all parts of the same family; we all have His Spirit in us; and we are all going to be taking part in God's plan forever.

Remember that we have one Leader — we trust Him and we've been identified with Him; and we all have the same Father who is over us all, living in all of us, and working through us.

Because His family does His work in this world, the Father gives each of us different abilities out of all the possible ones He has available. The abilities we are talking about are those which we have because of what Jesus has done. One of the Psalms predicted that when He went back to Heaven, He would give His people the abilities needed to do His work. And He has. Some of us are good at helping people understand how to become members of the forever family; some of us are good at teaching others more about God and our relationship with Him; others are good at caring for people and guiding them. There are other abilities, too, of course. All of them are given so that brothers and sisters can do the work He has for us, building up the family until the time comes when we are truly unified in our faith in and knowledge of our Liberator. Then we will be really mature and filled with His Spirit.

You see, God doesn't want us to stay little children — always following every new teaching that comes along or changing our minds about what we believe every time some liar comes along with a phony trip which he makes sound like the truth. He wants us to solidly know and speak the truth in love, growing up to be like Jesus who is the head of the family. His role as head of the family is like that of the head to the body. The whole body depends on Him. Each of us, as parts, help each other and help the whole body so that it grows in love toward what God wants it to be.

Since that body is the Father's forever family — and ours — we know that you want it to be perfect. Don't live like the unliberated. Their minds and spirits are

blind, because they don't know the Father and are unable to understand what He wants. They don't listen to Him, and they do all the rotten things that they can think of. And knowing what we ourselves were like, we expect that from people who don't have His Spirit teaching them.

But that isn't the kind of thing we've learned from Jesus! If you have really heard His voice and are paying attention to Him, get rid of your old way of living with its evil ways. Let Him make your mind and spirit new and give you a whole new self. Stop lying to each other and tell the truth, for those of us who are in God's family are not just separate people; we are attached to each other by one Spirit. If you get mad, don't stay that way for even one day, for when you are angry you aren't letting God fill you with His Spirit. It's then that the devil can cause you trouble.

If you've been into rip offs, stop it and use your hands instead for honest work so you can give to other people.

Don't be a garbagemouth but use good, kind words instead — words that help the people you are talking to. And don't hurt the Spirit who lives in you. Remember He is there because you received Him and you are now a child of the Father. One day you'll be freed from even the possibility of doing wrong. So get rid of resentment and bitterness and anger, along with bad-mouthing and hate of other people. Be kind to each other and as ready to forgive other people as God has forgiven you because you received His Son.

Follow the Father just like any child who is loved a lot follows his father. Let His love flow through you so that loving others is a habit for you — just like Jesus loves you and gave Himself as a sacrifice for you.

Slay away from abusing God's gift of sex and don't rip off other people. Don't bother popping off at the mouth or laughing at people. When we talk it should be to help each other and remind ourselves of God's goodness.

One thing is sure, no rotten-minded or avaricious

person has any share in the Father's family. Don't let those who try to excuse wrongdoing and wrong thinking fool you on this point, no matter how good their argument sounds. These are the kinds of things God is going to have to punish them for, so you shouldn't get into them. You know how it is: Once your spirit was filled with darkness, blinded to God, but now you are filled with God's light and you should act like it. If you let His light show in your life, you will be good and kind and helpful. So let your life be an example of what pleases Jesus our Leader.

Don't do things which are evil and wrong (no use listing them — you know the sort of thing we mean), but instead show them up for what they are. Some of these things are so bad we don't even want to write about them here. The point is, though, that when you show them up for what they are and the light lets them see their badness, some people may even come to Jesus. (That isn't so wild is it? It happened to you.) Like the cat said:

Awake, sleeper, and rise up from the dead and
Jesus will give you light.

So be careful how you act — not like fools, but like men who know the meaning and purpose of life. Make the best use of your time, in spite of how hard it is. Don't just go along with things but really get to know what God wants you to do. Don't waste your time getting stoned; you know where that gets you. Instead let the Father fill you with His Spirit. Talk with each other about Jesus and sing songs He gives you, making music in your hearts in fellowship with Him. Thank God for whatever happens in the name of Jesus, our Liberator and Leader. Work together closely because you all love Jesus and trust and honor Him.

To those of you who are married, we have some special things to say about how husband and wife should act with each other. The wife should let the husband be in charge, for the husband is the head of the family in the same way that Jesus is the head of His forever family. So wives should obey their husbands, just as

the family obeys Jesus our Leader. The husband, however, must give his wife the same kind of love Jesus gave us by giving Himself for us so that He could have a perfect and clean family. And, of course, washed clean by Him, the family is perfect in God's sight, with no spots or wrinkles or cracks — without a single fault.

That is how husbands should treat their wives, loving them as part of themselves — for they really are, since marriage makes two people one. Nobody hates his own body, but he cares for it the best he can, just as Jesus cares for His body, the family of believers. (The fact that the husband and wife are one body is in the Bible, which says, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be perfectly joined to his wife, and the two shall be one.") We know it is really hard to understand, but this illustration of how each of us is part of Jesus' body is important in showing how each of you husbands should love your wife and how each of you wives should respect your husband.

Those of you who are children should obey your parents. This is the right thing to do because Jesus has set them over you. It's sort of interesting that when you go back and look at the Ten Commandments, you find that the first one that had a promise was:

Honor your father and mother, and you will have a long life full of blessing.

Fathers, you should treat your children right and not overcorrect them and make it hard for them to honor you. Help them to grow up knowing Jesus and loving Him.

If any of you work for someone else, do the best job you can all the time, not just when the man is looking. Work for him just as you would for Jesus. God will repay you for every good thing you do for others.

If you have other people working for you, treat them kindly and pay them right. God has no favorites and neither should you.

Well, that's about it for this letter. Remember to get

your strength from God's mighty power which He has put in you. We are at war, and we don't mean a war against people made of flesh and blood. Our fight is against persons and powers who don't have bodies and don't need them — the evil rulers of the unseen world. Satan and all his evil spirits. For a battle of that kind you need full protection which only the Father can give. The best way we can think of to describe that protection is to take it piece by piece like the armor that knights wore in the old days. If you use all the armor God provides, you will be able to resist the devil whenever he attacks and when it is all over still be standing strong.

To do this, you will need the belt of truth around your middle and the breastplate of God's approval to protect your heart and inner being. You should have on your feet shoes to carry the good news of God's peace, the helmet of your liberation on your head, and the sword of God's Spirit, His Word, in your hand. Most of all you must have faith as your shield, for it can quench all the burning darts aimed at you by Satan. Keep talking to the Father all the time about everything. Talk with Him about other brothers and sisters, as well as yourself, and keep alert to their needs.

We're asking the Father to give inner peace to all of you and love with trust in Him and Jesus our Liberator. He will show His goodness to all who sincerely love His Son.

That's all for now. More later!

Letter 6

"But we're citizens of God's nation, members of
His family, and we're waiting for the day Jesus, our
liberator and leader, comes to take us to our homeland."

—Philippians 3:20

Letter 6

To the right on brothers and sisters all around the world who are digging on their relationship with the Father and are standing strong in their trust in Jesus, our Liberator and Leader. Every time we think of you we thank the Father for the joy and encouragement that your trust in Him gives us. Ever since you heard the Good News you've been spreading it to others. We know that our Father who started you as babies in His forever family will keep you growing toward adulthood until the day Jesus comes back for us. Even though we'll probably never see most of you until that day, the things we hear about how you're following Him make us strong in our times of weakness. We keep asking Him to teach you more and more how to use the love He gives you so that even your lives on this earth will be pure and clean until the day Jesus comes. We trust Him to show Himself through you to the people of this world.

One thing we want you to know is that all the things that are coming down around us are bringing honor to Jesus. When brothers and sisters act like Him when they get messed over, others lose their fear and are bolder in telling the Good News. We ought to all be talking with the Father especially about the ones who are getting the worst of it (like prison and torture and so forth) and asking Him to set them free. We know He'll do it one way or another. He'll either do it by taking them home to be with Him or by getting them out to stir up other brothers and sisters in getting on with getting out the Good News. Or even that He'll set them free in their spirits where they are so that He can use their lives to call us to a bolder stand for Himself.

As for us who are free (at the moment), let's stick together in getting the Good News out no matter what comes down. If you get hassled, enjoy it. The very fact that it's happening shows that the Good News divides people; some are going to hell and some are coming

to Jesus. It also shows where you're at because if you weren't getting to their heads, they wouldn't bother with you. And one more thing — Jesus hasn't only given us the privilege of knowing Him, but also the privilege of sharing in His suffering. We're in it together; so if you love Jesus, stick with each other.

If we care about each other, if we love each other, if there's anything special about the relationship of the brothers and sisters in the Father's family, if we feel each other's needs, then let's get it together and let His love put our heads and hearts into His purpose for His people. Forget about ego tripping to the top spot. Instead, be humble and look at all the other brothers and sisters as being better than yourself. If you're really secure in Jesus, then you don't have to worry about defending your own trip. You'll be free to serve the needs of your brothers and sisters and the family as a whole.

Remember, Jesus is the example for our lives and He wants us to get into His attitude about ourselves. You may have a lot of special abilities and skills, but dig this: Before the world was made, Jesus was God. But because He loved us so much, He ditched His Godness and all the power that went with it and became a slave in a human body. As a man He humbled Himself to the point of carrying out the Father's plan for Him to be killed unjustly by crucifixion. Because of that, the Father put Him in the highest place in the universe and gave Him the name "My Son." Someday, everybody and everything in God's created universe is going to bow to Him and say, "Jesus is Lord!"

So, brothers and sisters, let's keep doing what the Father wants in our lives — just like Jesus, our *first* Brother in the forever family. It's a serious business the Father's called us to, and we're not alone. He has put His Spirit in us to tell us what to do and to make us able to do it. Don't be bitching and moaning about what you've got to do. As God's children we should

live pure and clean lives in the middle of this rotten and dying world. *Please* relate to the fact that we are the only light in the middle of their darkness and that light gives *Life*. *There* is something to be proud of and, if we die for it, something to be glad of. Whatever comes down — “Thank You, Jesus!”

Watch out for the law pushers. They'll lay a heavy rap on you about how you got to follow rules in order to keep up your relationship with Jesus. Following a set of rules doesn't make us the Father's children. It's digging on the relationship with Him. Trust Jesus, not what you can do. We've said it before, and we say it again with tears in our eyes: There are people who live among the brothers and sisters who don't know Jesus and are against His plan for making men right with God. They are going to hell, their god is their own selfish desires, they brag about what they should be ashamed of, and all they're behind is what they can grab for themselves out of this dying world system.

But we're citizens of God's nation, members of His family, and we're waiting for the day Jesus, our Liberator and Leader, comes to take us to our homeland. When He does, He will change our dying bodies into beautiful forever bodies like His.

When God brought us into His family, He changed our lives. He doesn't want us to have our heads into what we were before we knew Him. It doesn't matter what went down in your life before that time. You might have been a needle freak, into some kind of sexual hang-up, into ripping people off; you might have even killed someone. Even if you came from the other side and “never did anything wrong,” the Father forgot all that trash and you should too. Don't bother talking about it or even thinking about it because it's all past and the only thing that matters is that now you know Jesus. From now on just push to know Him better; to know the power that brought Him back from the dead; to have a part with Him in His suffering; and to learn

what it means to die like Jesus died. What we need to be into is experiencing the fresh new life which we have through the living connection with Him. Of course, none of us is perfect yet, but the attitude to have is to forget the past and keep on stretching out toward all that He has for us. Look forward to being all that Jesus has planned for you to be.

So, brothers and sisters, stand firm in Jesus. Be happy in Him and enjoy Him. Be patient and gentle with everybody. Jesus is coming soon. Don't worry about anything but talk to the Father about everything. Tell Him what you need and keep thanking Him. When you do that, His peace (the peace that goes deeper than any *human* mind can think of) will protect your hearts and heads through your living connection with Jesus.

Let the Father teach you how to be happy no matter what comes down. Be hip to the fact that whether you have all the money and stuff in the world or nothing at all, you can still do everything He wants you to through Jesus' power in your life.

Just one last thing. Whatever is true, whatever is good, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is beautiful, whatever is kind — all the good things the Father has given us — that's where your head belongs.

Letter 7

"Get your joy from being tied to the rest of the family by the Father's love. Get your heads into God's secret plan: That's Jesus, the source of all wisdom and all true knowledge."

— Colossians 2:2, 3

Letter 7

Dear brothers and sisters who trust Jesus and love the family. We know that you've got the Father's loving-kindness and peace. Every time we talk to Him about you, we thank Him for what we hear He's doing in your life. Keep on trusting Him and keep on showing love to the rest of God's children. The Good News has taught us that this won't be a waste of time because of what Jesus is going to give us on the day He comes back for us. Everywhere the Good News goes it changes people and causes them to be more like Him (just like it changed you).

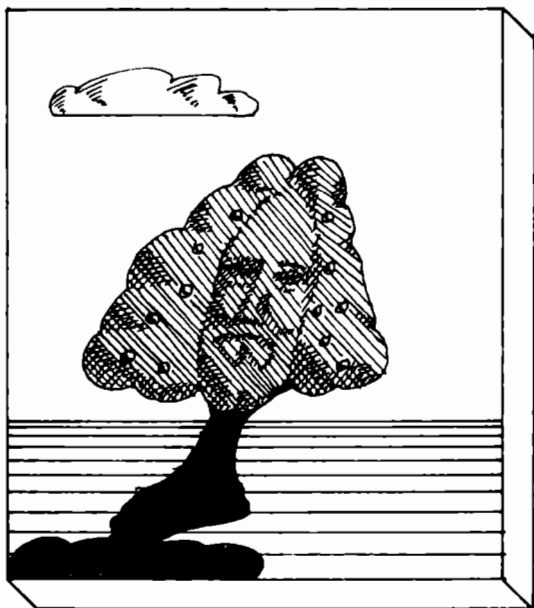
The Father wants us to see things like He does and understand our spiritual relationship to Him. We ought to live like the people He's chosen us to be so that when people see our lives, they know what He's like. Let's keep on getting to know Him better so we can have His strength and be able to stand firm and still be patient and happy no matter what comes down. Let's stop right now and thank the Father for everything He's given us as members of His family.

"Thank You, Father, for freeing us from the power of Satan's darkness and bringing us into Your light through Your Son who paid for our freedom by giving His blood."

Let's get a few things straight about who Jesus really is. He is, in human form, the visible image of the invisible Father. He's high above everything in creation, and, as a matter of fact, He made everything in the whole universe. The whole spirit world as well as the material world was made by Him for His own use. He existed before everything He made and He still keeps it together. He's also the head of His spiritual body, the family. He created physical life; He created the new forever life — from death — and as we share that life with Him, the whole universe will see that He is the true "Supreme Commander." Dig it: In that human body was all the nature and power of the living God.

The Father then took all that perfection and crucified Him for every being in the dying universe to live in Him. And we who were His enemies and in our minds hated Him and were going our own way have been welcomed into His own family. His human body was killed so that right now we stand in front of a pure and perfect Father, pure and perfect ourselves, with nothing against us. That's what comes from trusting Jesus and not running away from the Good News and the hope it has for the whole world.

Before the creation of the world God had a mind-blowing secret that He kept from people until He sent His Son. Now He's spreading it around the world and those who trust Him understand it. Dig the secret: Jesus — living inside your human body and promising



you forever life with Him. That's why we go around talking about Jesus to everybody we meet, giving them a chance to turn from themselves and follow Him. That way all people have a chance to be what God wants them to be. What better way could you pour out the energy the Father has put inside you?

Get your joy from being tied to the rest of the family by the Father's love. Get your heads into God's secret plan: That's Jesus, the source of all wisdom and all true knowledge.

We want you to know this so that you'll remember where your new life really is. You started it by just trusting Jesus; now just keep living it the same way. Our relationship with Jesus is like a tree and its roots. Let the living connection with Him cause you to grow strong in your trust and produce His fruits of happiness and thanksgiving.

Don't let people get to your life with their head trips. Philosophy can sound pretty good sometimes, but it's far short of what Jesus has for us. Like we said before: In His human body was all the nature and power of the living God. When we've got the living connection with Jesus, we're filled with God Himself and we have everything we ever need to have. All this because of who Jesus is and what He did for us. You didn't get this relationship because of what you or any other human being did. Jesus set you free by identifying you with Himself in His death, burial, and resurrection. Your rotten life deserved death, so in Himself Jesus took *you* to the cross, dumped all your rottenness on Himself, and gave you new life. And that long list of the reasons God had to smash us Jesus nailed to that cross. Any power that Satan and his spiritual comrades had over us has now been broken.

So don't let people lay trips on you about what you eat or drink or that some days are more special than others. When God gave instructions to the Jews on things like this, it was part of His plan to bring the

Messiah through them. When Jesus came, the need for them was gone. Don't let people jive you about how they built up their faith in Jesus by hurting their bodies or worshiping angels or seeing some fantastic, freaky vision that they've built into a beautiful mind game. They're like forgetting the head (Jesus) who controls and gives strength to the whole body. As we listen to Him, we work together and the family grows the way the Father wants it to grow.

Since you died with Jesus and are accepted by the Father on that basis, why get hung up on the world system's way of trying to please God by what you do? Don't go under to men's rules like, "don't eat this," "don't touch that." God put everything on this earth to be used, so listen to Him and not to men about how you use it. These rules may sound pretty good — like they're hard and it's a challenge to follow them — but they don't do a thing to conquer our desire. They just feed our ego trips.

Since Jesus raised you up from the dead with Himself, get your head into the things He's into, right there with the Father. Forget about this world's system. As far as it's concerned, you're dead already. The only life you've got is your new life in Jesus. Someday He's going to show Himself to the whole world, and when He does, we'll be right there with Him.

When it comes down to balling, pornography, hustling, wanting what other people got, and all other kinda low down ways, *you are dead!* All this kind of stuff adds up to trusting something other than God. And that's why He's going to vamp on the people who don't trust His Son. You were into all that trash, but forget it now — along with all the bad mouthing that goes with it. Don't lie to each other. Be honest and open and living in your new self that the Father keeps making more like Jesus every day. In our new life there's no difference between people at racial levels, at social levels, at political levels, or any other level because

Jesus is all that matters and He lives in all the brothers and sisters.

As the Father's pure and much loved children, our lives should show His tenderness, His kindness, His humility, His gentleness, and His patience. Let's carry each other along. When you get burned, learn to forgive just like Jesus forgave you. Most important, let His love weld us together to show His perfection in the family. Let the peace that Jesus gives take over your lives because we've been made a family so we can enjoy His peace together. Thank God for that! Put Jesus' teaching to work in your lives and teach and help each other along with songs that He gives you. Sing with the happiness of Jesus in your hearts. Whatever you do, man, do it for Jesus and thank the Father.

Wives, live for your husbands, just like Jesus wants you to. And husbands, love your wives and don't even think of being mean to them. Children, do what your parents tell you to because that really makes Jesus happy. Fathers, don't be too hard on your children or they'll get discouraged about life. People, if you work for somebody, do what they want done, not just to please them but because you're really working for Jesus. As a matter of fact, whatever you do, really get behind it and keep on pushing for Jesus and not for other people. The only rewards that count are the ones you get from Jesus, and He's the One you're working for. If you're ripping off the guy you work for, you're the loser. If you've got people working for you, treat them right. Remember, Jesus is *your* boss.

OK, brothers and sisters, let's talk to the Father all the time, thanking Him and looking for His answers. Ask Him to help the brothers and sisters to be strong in their suffering for Him and to help us all get across all that He really is to people who don't know Him. Keep open to the needs of those people and make good use of your time with them. Be kind to them, always tell the truth, and deal with each one as an individual.

Love you, brothers and sisters. Keep trusting Jesus.
Right on!

Letter 8

“A beautiful picture of the way the Father wants
us to be spreading the Good News is a mother
breast-feeding her baby. It's a love so gentle and pure
that it wouldn't try to hurt or get anything for itself.”

— I Thessalonians 2:7

Letter 8

To the brothers and sisters who know Jesus is coming back. Members of the Father's family everywhere are helped when they see how your trust in Jesus causes you to do His work. The way you serve other people with love and the way you look for Jesus' coming shows everybody that you belong to the Father. Remember, we didn't choose the Father, but He chose us and proved to us that His Good News was true by the power of His Spirit in our lives. Let's keep on copying Jesus and trusting His Spirit no matter what comes down. When we do that, we'll be examples for other brothers and sisters. And we won't have to go around telling people about how much we trust the Father because they'll be talking about what they see Him doing in our lives. They'll tell about how we turned away from the world system to trust the Father and wait for His Son Jesus to come back. And we should keep telling them that the Father raised Jesus from the dead to set us free from the punishment our rotten lives deserve.

Sometimes when we go around telling the Good News, people are going to hate us for it and come down on us. We just have to keep trusting the Father to make us bold in talking about Jesus instead of coping out to the pressure. We also have to keep our heads straight about why we're sharing the Good News. People have to see that we're not out to burn them, not trying to jive them or just make them "see things our way." The Father wants us to spread the Good News in truth and love, not pleasing people but pleasing Him. Trusting His Spirit, we can act like Jesus and show people the very different life He has for them.

A beautiful picture of the way the Father wants us to be spreading the Good News is a mother breast-feeding her baby. It's a love so gentle and pure that it wouldn't try to hurt or get anything for itself. That love only

wants to help and to give and make strong. When people feel secure in that love, *then* we can feel free to beg, encourage, and even demand that they act like children in the Father's forever family should.

When you really get behind serving the Father, you can expect a lot of hassle because people get jealous of what they see in your life. A lot of Jews in particular are gonna be burned when they see non-Jews getting to know God. It was unbelieving Jews who killed their own prophets — and even Jesus who was sent to free them. They've been against the Father's plan ever since and the result is that they're going to do all they can to keep people from trusting Him. All they're doing is building up their own punishment. For us, though, the greatest happiness is seeing people trust the Father and become members of His forever family. Think what it will be like to be together with them and Jesus, our Liberator, when He comes back!

Now when the hassles come down, and they *are* gonna come down, keep looking for ways to encourage each other. Don't let Satan get his claws into any of the brothers and sisters. Let your trust in the Father be a shining light for all the other members of the family who are really having it bad. When you stand strong in your relationship with Jesus, all of us together experience more of His life. There are no words that we can use to thank the Father for the joy and happiness this togetherness brings. But we do know that He makes our love for each other and everybody else keep on growing and overflowing. He wants His family to be pure and clean when Jesus comes back for us.

We know that a lot of you are really into your relationship with the Father. We ask you not to stop and be satisfied where you are, but to keep on pushing to know Him better. Be careful of the traps Satan wants to catch you in — especially balling somebody you're

not married to. There are some ways that you can break your relationship with the Father and nobody knows it but you and Him. But when you abuse His gift of sex, not only do you and the one you're into it with get bummed up, but so do other brothers and sisters. So the Father wants you to be pure about the way you handle your body and do your part in making the family clean. He gave you His Spirit to teach and lead you, and if you blow it, that's the One you're hurting.

God's love is the most important thing we can share with each other. If you still have to learn that lesson, learn it good. If you've learned it, use it. If you're using it, use it more. Learn to live a quiet life and enjoy simple things. Don't be messin' with other people's business. Don't look for other people to support you, but work so that you'll be able to have what you need, be able to help others, and give people who don't know Jesus one less thing to bitch about.

One thing we all have to keep in our heads is what is happening to all the brothers and sisters who die before Jesus comes back. People who don't know Jesus have a good excuse for being sad when someone they know dies. But us who know Jesus have all the reason in the world to be happy. And the Father proved what was going to happen to us when He brought Jesus out of that grave. We know that the spirits of those who have died trusting Him are with Him right now. When He comes back for us, the first thing that will happen will be their new bodies coming out of that old grave. Someday Jesus is going to come, and we'll hear an angel shout and a trumpet blow, and our dead brothers and sisters are going to fly right off this earth. And those of us who are still alive will fly right behind them to meet Jesus and be with Him *forever*! Keep reminding each other about this and dig it.

When is it going to happen? There's no need for us to get into that because you know it's going to happen in a flash. People are going to be sitting around saying,

"everything's cool, peace and love to all." And they're going to get smashed before they know where it's coming from. But that day that's going to bring death to so many is going to bring life to us. We won't be surprised if we've got our eyes on Jesus. If you can dig it, we are children of light and of the day and we don't belong to darkness and night. So let's keep our eyes open and our heads straight — not sleeping or loaded. Get wrapped up in trusting the Father and living in His love and protect your head with the thought of Jesus coming back. God's not going to vamp on us because Jesus has already taken our rap so that whether we're ready or not, He's going to take us to be with Himself. Groove on that, people.

To wrap it up, brothers and sisters, we want to remind you of a couple of things. Respect your teachers and leaders and love them. Live in peace with each other. Warn those that don't behave themselves. Help out the weak ones. Pick up the hurt ones. Be patient with everybody. You don't heal hurt with more hurt so always do good. Stay happy. Talk with the Father all the time. Thank Him for *everything*, 'cause that's what He wants you to do. Don't put down spiritual gifts and abilities. Take a hard look at everything for what it is; hold on to what's good and turn loose what's bad.

We're trusting the Father to make you clean and pure, a healed and whole human being waiting for Jesus to come for you. He asked you to be pure, so you can count on Him making you that way.

Remember us when you talk with the Father.

We love you all because of Jesus.

Letter 9

“But we can be thankful that we belong to Him. The
Father planned from the very first to draw us into
His family by the love of His spirit and our trust
in the truth.”

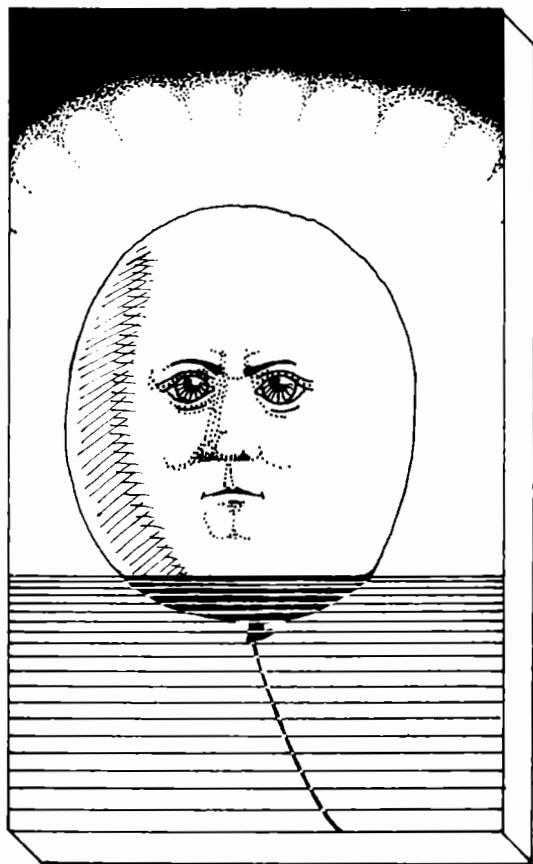
— II Thessalonians 2:13

Letter 9

Another letter to the brothers and sisters who know Jesus is coming back. We keep thanking the Father because you trust Him and keep loving each other more all the time.

We want to remind you to be patient and to trust the Father when hassles and bad times come because He's using these things to make you ready for the work He has for you in His universe forever. He's also getting together punishment for those who are coming down on you. When Jesus comes back for us, all that's come down will be in the past and we'll be with Him forever. But those who have turned away from Him and dumped on His plan are going to go to hell and will never see Him. That's what's going to happen when He comes back to give honor for what has happened in the lives of the people who believe Him. So make sure that you belong to the Father and that you're doing what He wants done. Then people will be talking about how good Jesus is because of what they see in your life. That's the Father's gift to us.

Now about Jesus' coming back for us. Don't get shook when people tell you that He has already come. Don't even listen to "visions" or "revelations from God" that say that it's happened. There are a lot of things that have to come down first. When the time is ripe, the first thing to happen will be a large number of brothers and sisters turning away from what you know to be the truth. Then the Son of Destruction will play his hand and set himself up to be god. The only thing that holds him back right now is God's Spirit in the lives of the members of His family. When the Father takes us away, along with His Spirit, this Son of Destruction will show up, and he won't be put down until Jesus Himself stomps him someday. Satan will bring that man into power with all kinds of tricks and phony



miracles, and everyone who turned away from God's love will be fooled. They didn't want to know the Father, so He'll let them believe those lies and they'll be sucked into the same punishment that Satan and all his comrades have coming to them for hating good and loving evil.

But we can be thankful that we belong to Him. The Father planned from the very first to draw us into His family by the love of His Spirit and our trust in the truth. He wants us to be getting the Good News out so that other people can know Jesus as Liberator and Leader. So take a stand and don't budge an inch from the truth. Then Jesus our Leader and God our Father who love us so much and have given us life forever will give you courage and strength to do the Father's work.

Ask Jesus to give strength to all the brothers and sisters working for Him so that the work will get done and He can come back for us. That's the only way that we're going to get out of this dying world and away from the people who mess us over. While we're still here, we can trust Him to protect us from Satan. We can trust God's Spirit in the lives of our sisters and brothers because we know He will teach them more and more about the Father's love.

If there's a member of the family who's just sitting around and letting other people do his work, you're going to have to deal with that person for his sake and yours. The best way to do that is to put him out of the close fellowship. Just tell him "people who don't work don't eat." Now that may hurt you but it's the right thing to do, and that way there won't be people sitting around messing in other people's business. Don't treat him like an enemy but like a young member of the family who needs to be corrected.

Well, we're trusting Jesus to give you His peace and be with you all the time. He's coming again — soon!

Letter 10

“Don't let anybody get down on your case about being 'too young.' Let the Father make you the kind of person they'll want to follow. Be an example in what you say, how you act, your love, your trust in the Father, and your clean life.”

— I Timothy 4:12

Letter 10

A letter to the men the Father has chosen to lead the brothers and sisters. There are a lot of things we should keep in mind in helping God's children. In this letter we're going to run down some solutions to problems we all keep running into.

One thing that keeps popping up is the problem of people who keep wanting to invent ways to improve your spiritual life. They get into myths that are supposed to give you a deeper spiritual insight and get hung-up on trips about how a person can work his way closer to God. These hairbrained ideas just stir up a bunch of arguments and hassles and do nothing to teach the brothers and sisters more about trusting the Father. The only things worth teaching are love from a pure heart, a clean mind, and a strong trust. These wiped-out spiritual philosophers have missed that whole point and have tripped off into a fantasy world of words. They say they're interested in the laws of God? The real laws of God have a purpose, if they are used the way they are meant to be used. Those laws weren't made for people who are right with the Father but for people who are going their own way. That law shoots holes in those who hate God, those who rebel against Him, those who insult Him, those who hate their parents, murderers, perverts, homosexuals, pirates, liars, etc. and drives them to guilt and despair. When these people, and even those who are misusing the law, see it for what it really is and by it see where they are, you can be sure that God will use it to draw them to Himself. In God's eyes it doesn't matter how bad we've been; even the worst of us can have new life in His family. That's why Jesus came.

Be prepared for the spiritual battle that's going on all the time. Trust Jesus. Keep your head straight. Do what's right. God's Spirit is your protection against the false trips of these men we've been talking about.

Get into talking to the Father a lot about what's going

down in the world around you. Ask Him to guide the people who are running the country — and the world — you're living in so we can live quietly and peacefully, serving Jesus. The God who wants all men to know Him wants that for us. There is only one God, and Jesus is the only one who brings the Father and people together — our Jesus, the one who died to buy us back from the hands of Satan. Because of that we can feel free (matter of fact, it's a necessity) to always talk to the Father, alone and together, without hassle and hard feelings.

Teach the sisters not to worry about outside beauty or what they should wear to make themselves look good, but to get themselves in tune with the Father and let Him make them beautiful by the good, kind things He does through them. That's the way women who claim to be sisters should live. Sisters should listen and learn, quietly and humbly. Don't let them teach or exercise authority over men. The spiritual principle behind this is that Adam was created first, *then* Eve. Also, it wasn't Adam who was deceived by Satan, but Eve. Women, by their very nature, are easily fooled by bad teaching and false "truth." The pain they face in childbirth is proof of this. It's a reminder from the Father that they can't make it on their own but have to trust Jesus to give them His love and purity.

If a brother has an honest desire to serve the Father by leading the family, it's a good thing. He should be living a clean and pure life that people can't kick about. If he's married, it should be to just one woman. He should be stable, careful, naturally cool, respected by others, friendly, and able to teach. He ought to be convinced in his own head that he's not going to get stoned anymore. He shouldn't be a person who looks to his fists to solve his hassles. He shouldn't be avaricious, but gentle, loving, and kind. If he has a family, he should be in charge of it, and his children should respect and obey him. (If you can't control your own family of children, how you gonna handle a family of adults?) Don't drop a responsibility this big on a new brother. It

could turn into a head trip for him and ruin his life. Brothers you pick for leaders have to have a good reputation with everybody, even those who don't know Jesus. Otherwise bad-mouthing from others will wreck him and put the whole family on a bummer.

Brothers and sisters who are into giving their lives to serve the family should be aware of these standards. They should be serious and honest, shouldn't be into getting loaded, not into getting rich, and should have their minds centered on the fact that Jesus is inside them. The best way to handle it is to give them a trial period, and if they prove themselves, let them stay on in this position. The sisters should be stable; they shouldn't go around cutting people down behind their backs; they should let Jesus control their desires; and they should be faithful in everything they do. If the brothers who are into this kind of work are married, they shouldn't have more than one wife, and they should have a solid, loving control of their own families. Brothers and sisters who do a good job serving the family this way not only get looked up to by others, but also get heavy vibes of joy from the Father.

There's a lot more that could be said about these things, but what we've written shows the kind of people that should be leading and serving the Father's family. Remember, that family belongs to the living God and is one of the most basic ways He uses to present His truth to the world. And we all agree that the only way we came to be a part of that family is by the One:

Who came in a human body,
Who was declared to be God by His Spirit,
Who was seen that way by angels,
Who was rapped about around the world,
Who came so mere men could know Him,
Who the Father took back to Himself.

God's Spirit has laid heavy raps on brothers in the past, saying that in the time just before Jesus comes back there will be people calling themselves brothers and sisters who cop out on Jesus altogether. They get all strung out behind teachers who are really following

demons — liars who are so far into hypocrisy that they don't even feel bad about it anymore. These phonies lay down raps about how you can't get married and how you can't eat this or that kind of food (food that God made to be enjoyed by people who believe Him and trust Him). Dig it! Everything God made is good and there's nothing we shouldn't use as long as we're truly thankful for it. Our Father makes these things clean for us by His Word and our talking to Him. Keep reminding the brothers and sisters of this, trusting the Father and what He has said.

Don't waste your time with these fantasies and acid dreams. Instead, discipline yourself in your life with the Father. You know that disciplining your body is helpful. Well, spiritual discipline gets you into real life now as well as preparing you for the forever life. Right on! Those of us who know Jesus work and struggle because we know where it's really at — we're trusting the living God, the Liberator of all who are willing to receive Him. Keep reminding the family of this.

Don't let anybody get down on your case about being "too young." Let the Father make you the kind of person they'll want to follow. Be an example in what you say, how you act, your love, your trust in the Father, and your clean life. Share God's Word with the family and help them in applying it to their lives. Use the spiritual abilities He gave you. Involve yourselves with others so deep that you hurt. Keep checking yourself out and stick to God's standards. In doing that and teaching other people to do the same, you'll free yourself and them from the world system.

Don't stomp on anybody. Treat older men like your father, younger men like your brother, older women like your mother, and younger women as your sister (and no more!).

There are always going to be brothers and sisters among us who financially aren't able to take care of themselves. Now there's always welfare and trips like that, but let's face it, there's no warmth like other brothers and sisters who really care. Some of these

people could really get behind using their time in the work for God's family in the world. So it would really be good for you to put resources into helping them so that they're free to handle the work. But be cool. You have to use God's wisdom in order to be sure that they don't cop out. You've got to look at where their heads are, their circumstances, and their age — and make sure they're really into serving Jesus before you make it a standing agreement. Relatives among the brothers and sisters should be the ones who care the most, and wherever possible they should help their relatives who are up against the wall. This adds a degree of warmth.

Leaders who are doing a good job using the ability that the Father gave them deserve both respect and financial support — especially the ones involved in working to get out the Good News and teaching the family. Remember, the Old Testament says, "Let an ox which is working the harvest eat some of the grain." It also says, "People who work should get paid for it."

Don't accept an accusation against one of the leaders unless there are two or three witnesses to whatever he's supposed to have done wrong. If you find out it's an honest beef, expose it and put him down in front of the whole family as a warning to others. Don't make exceptions because of the brother's position. Don't be in a hurry to pick a brother as a leader. Think about the example he has to set, and if he turns out to be really rotten, part of the responsibility belongs to you. Above all, keep yourself clean. Some men's lives are really rotten and everybody sees it and you can do something about it. Other men are rotten on the inside and nobody knows. The same way, sometimes good things people do are known right away and sometimes they're not. So don't be too quick to either build up or bring down a brother who's a leader.

An employee should always respect the person that he works for so that nobody can take a shot at the Father or His truth. And if you're working for a brother, make sure you do a good job for him because he is a brother who trusts and loves Jesus like you do.

These are the kinds of things that we've got to be teaching, just like Jesus told us. If some dude tries to lay a different trip on our heads, we know it's because he's not into Jesus. He's on his own ego trip and downright stupid. He's got this insane craving for word games and "intellectual dialogue." All that brings down is jealousy, hassle, "cussin' an' swearin'," and evil little mind games. It finally comes down to men bitching back and forth, not caring about the truth and only into the Good News for what they can get out of it. Stay away from people like that. But those of us who are trusting Jesus have got everything. We didn't bring anything into the world; we can't take anything out of it. If we've got food in our bellies and clothes on our backs, that's enough — who needs to get rich? People who are into that get so trapped they don't know where they're coming from. Some get so screwed up that they ruin their whole lives. The love of money is the basis for all kinds of rotten rip off things. You can get so far into the money bag that you forget about God and smash your life.

Man, split that gig like the plague! Dig the fact that forever life is *yours right now*. The challenge is yours in front of our Father who gives life and our Liberator who never copped out: Stand loving and stand clean until He comes back. And He *is* coming back — in the Father's time — because time is His, the only Controller, the Chairman of chairmen, the Leader of leaders, the one who lives in light too bright for people to look at. Praise Him! Right on!

Tell the ones who have a lot of bread not to look down on poor people and not to trust in their coin 'cause one of these days it's gonna go. They should be trusting in the Father who has life forever for His children. All they have should be used to do good for other people. Tell them to be kind and share what they have. Then they'll be saving at the forever bank that never burns down and they'll have real life forever.

Be sure to do all God's called you to do and forget the empty rapping that people who have missed God's plan are into. Brother, Jesus loves you.

Letter II

**"Remember to use the spiritual abilities the Father
has given you by His Spirit. Don't hold back and
play chicken because He's given us a life style of
power and love and of being really together people."**

— II Timothy 1:6, 7

Letter II

A second letter to the men called by the Father to lead the family. God the Father and Jesus our Leader are giving you their kindness and tenderness and peace to share with the brothers and sisters. We thank God all the time that He has put men like you in His work. Remember to use the spiritual abilities the Father has given you by His Spirit. Don't hold back and play chicken because He's given us a life style of power and love and of being really together people.

With His gift of that kind of life style, we don't have to be afraid or embarrassed to take a stand for Jesus. We can take whatever people throw at us and be happy through the hurting it brings because of the Good News and the Father's strength. He's already shown that strength to us by freeing us from the insane trips we were into and setting us apart for His special work. It wasn't like we deserved it, but because He had a loving plan from before the beginning for the family He would build through His Son, Jesus. So no matter what comes down, whether we get thrown in the slams or beat up, we aren't fools if we're doing His work, and He'll take care of those of us who have given ourselves to Him until the day Jesus comes back. Keep on living the kind of life His Spirit has taught you to live, using the trust and love the Liberator has given you. And let His Spirit be the one who protects that stash.

Let Jesus strengthen your spirit with His. Then teach what His Spirit teaches you to brothers you can depend on so they can teach it to brothers they depend on. Take whatever hurt comes down like a good soldier in Jesus' army. Here are three examples that show where our heads should be at: 1) If a dude is in an army, he doesn't get hung up on where the bread's coming from because he's given his life to his leader. 2) A jock can't win a game unless he plays by the rules.

3) A farmer works hard but he gets first pick of his harvest. Dig how those things apply to your life as a leader in God's family.

Get it down right and hold on to it. Jesus was born in a human body as a descendant of David, and He came back to life from the dead, just like the Good News tells us. They can lock up brothers and sisters who believe that, but they can't lock up that truth. If it happens to you, be happy because it's part of God's plan for bringing other brothers and sisters into the family. It's really true, man, that:

Because we died with Him, we're going to live with Him.

If we suffer with Him, we'll rule with Him.

If we say we don't know Him, He'll say He doesn't know us.

If we're too weak to trust Him, He still loves us because He's inside us and He can't put down a part of Himself.

Keep teaching these things to the family. Don't let them get into fool word games — they only mess up people's heads. Do your best to do your work as a leader in the family the way God wants it done — always faithful to His truth. That way you won't feel guilty. Be cool to empty raps and the rhetoric of the world system. Man, that stuff spreads like cancer and it'll rip the whole family. What God has set down is going to stand anyway, so you might as well get your head into it and stay there. Like He said, "Our Leader knows the ones that belong to Him," and "Everyone that follows Him should stay away from evil." In the Father's family there are people who are willing to be used by Him and there are people who are digging their own trip. You, in your life, be sure to stay clear of ridiculous hassles and stay usable for the Father. Don't follow your own desires, like most young men dig doing, but get into goodness, trust, love, and peace — following Jesus with a pure heart. Get away from "intellectual discussions." They just make people mad. As a leader in the family, you should be kind, able to

teach them, patient with the fighters, gently showing them where it's at. If you do it that way, they're going to be more open to see their foolishness and turn to the Father's truth. Then they'll get out of the Devil's trap.

Know this brothers: Before Jesus comes back a hard rain's gonna fall. The people around then are going to be selfish, avaricious, laying out plastic raps, and living phony lives. They'll bad-mouth God, run down their parents, accept gifts and hate the giver, and have rotten attitudes about life. These people won't want to love others, be right with God, say anything good about anyone, or handle their own desires. They'll be mean, hate good, burn their friends, and feel free to step on other people. Stoned on their own egos, they'll love having a good time more than they love God. They'll have a religion and yet claim that it doesn't have any power over them. Don't let them pull you into the hole they're in. Some of these guys are so shrewd that they drag behind them a trail of screwed up women who are so much into their own guilt that they'll follow anybody who promises them a way out. These women will learn anything, but they never get to know the truth. There have always been and there always will be men who oppose the truth. Their heads are on backwards and they do everything they can to put down trust in Jesus. But they won't get far 'cause God's going to show their trips up for what they are. But the real leaders in the Father's forever family are going to follow Jesus' teaching, way of life, purpose, trust, patience, love, and steadiness. And face it: Everybody that really follows Jesus is going to get vamped on. All the time the phonies and the hypocrites are gonna be going from bad to worse, messing over others and screwing themselves up. But you keep on truckin' with the things you've learned and know, remembering that you've learned them from God's Spirit. The writings He's given us, the Old Testament and the New, are the source of all wis-

dom because they lead to Jesus. Everything in them was given by God's Spirit to teach us, to correct us, and to show us where He wants us to go. They teach us how to live in a right relationship with the Father so we can be His men and do His work.

So do it! Someday Jesus is coming to judge the living and the dead, and His nation will last forever. Spread the truth whether you feel like it or not. Show people where they're wrong, tell them to get their heads straight, and be tender with them. Whatever goes down, keep on teaching them and be patient. Sometimes people who say they are brothers and sisters will turn away from the truth to listen to rambling rhetoric. They'll run to "teachers" who rap down the myths they want to hear. They won't touch the truth with a pole. That's why you've got to keep your head straight, take what they do to you, spread the Good News, and do everything the Spirit tells you to. Be ready to be poured out for Jesus, even if it means your life. Make it your aim to be able to say like Paul did just before they offed him:

I have fought the fight; I have run the race; I never stopped trusting. The Father is going to give me my reward on the day Jesus comes back. And not just me, but all the brothers and sisters who ache for Him to come.

He said that when all his friends had left him. And you may be there too someday, but then and now, Jesus is with your spirit.

Letter 12

"Dig it, there are a lot of spiritual anarchists running around who have to be shut up. They're messing over whole families, teaching a system of rules they made up just so they can look cool."

— Titus 1:10, 11

Letter 12

A third letter to the men called by the Father to lead the family. The Father has picked us to show the brothers and sisters how to trust Him, to teach them His truth, and to show them how they can have life forever which He promised before the world began. Jesus has given us the job of spreading this Good News everywhere we go. When we do, people receive Him; and wherever there are Jesus freaks, there have to be leaders. The brothers who do that work should be living clean lives, should have only one wife, and should have kids who know Jesus and follow Him. These leaders have to be as clean in people's eyes as they are in God's. They shouldn't be egotistical or heavy-handed. They should stay away from booze and dope, keep out of fights, and keep their heads out of the money thing. Leaders should dig having people in their homes. They should love what's good, be solid, be fair, and have their eyes on the Father and their lives run by the Spirit. They have to stick to God's truth so they can help weaker members of the family and put down lies.

Dig it, there are a lot of spiritual anarchists running around who have to be shut up. They're messing over whole families, teaching a system of rules they made up just so they can look cool. Because of this you have to be strong and bold in telling the brothers and sisters where it's really at. The Father wants the whole family to be trusting Him instead of messing with these trumped-up religious hoaxes made up by men who don't know Him. See, everything is pure to people whose hearts are made pure by Jesus; but to those who don't know Him, *nothing* is pure because their heads and their hearts are polluted from the start. They claim they know God, but their very life styles show that they've turned their backs on Him. Their rotten and rebellious lives make it impossible for them to do anything good.

But what you're gonna have to do is keep on teaching the family what the Father really says. The old men should be solid, cool, and sensible — strong in their trust, love, and patience. The old women should be just as solid; they shouldn't be bad-mouthing others or getting loaded; and they should teach the best things in life to the young women. The young women should love their husbands and their children. They should be sensible, pure, good at taking care of their families, and kind; and they should be following the leadership of their own husbands — so that people who know them won't bad-mouth the Father. The young men should be sensible, too. They should be an example of people who follow Jesus and no one else. They should teach just what God says so that people who are against them won't have anything to bitch about.

Brothers and sisters who work for other people should do what they're told, try to please those they work for, and not talk back. Don't rip off your employer. Be honest so he'll see Jesus in you. See, God has shown His love and goodness so all people can know Him. Once we do, we don't feel like "doing our own thing" and doing whatever our old human nature wants to do. We learn to live sensibly, digging our relationship with the Father here and now, and we keep looking for that heavy day when Jesus comes back for us and shows His greatness. He was looking forward to that day when He gave Himself to rescue us, to make us pure, and to make us His special people — doing His work in the world.

Keep on rapping about these things and teaching them to the family. Don't let anybody put you down about it. Remind them to obey everyone who holds authority over them, to be into doing good things, not to bad-mouth anybody, not to pick fights, and to be gentle and helpful to everybody. Remember that we used to be fools ourselves. We were disobedient, faked out by phony lies, slaves to our bodies, and wasting our lives hating each other. But when Jesus touched our lives with His kindness and love, He brought us to

Himself, not on the basis of any good that we did, but just because He cares. He washed us clean and His Spirit gave us new life. That's all ours through Jesus our Liberator who has made us right in the Father's eyes so that we can be part of His forever family.

That's really true, and we better keep on telling people about it so that the sisters and brothers will act like God's children. Stick to rapping about these things and stay away from stupid arguments and hassles about God's law. Those things are so useless. If any brother or sister keeps hassling about these things or anything else, warn him twice and then kick him out if he keeps it up, because you know he's really into busting up the family. Instead, lead the family to be helping people, giving them what they need for helping others so they won't be wasting their lives.

We love you, brothers in Jesus.

Letter 13

**"It makes us happy when we hear that your love
has made other members of the family happy."**

— Philemon 7

Letter 13

A note to the brothers and sisters who open their homes for the family to meet in — from a couple brothers at Berkeley. It's a gas, and we thank the Father for your love and trust in Jesus that you've shown to all the brothers and sisters around you. We keep asking Him to lead you to share with others what you know about Jesus. It makes us happy when we hear that your love has made other members of the family happy.

There's a favor we'd like to ask. Sometimes brothers and sisters have been with you, accepted responsibilities, and then really blown it bad and split. It may seem now like they're really useless and wasted. But sometimes when they're away, they see how screwed up they are and they find other members of the family. As they live and work with them, they learn more about how to trust God's Spirit in their lives. They come to see how wrong they were, how to correct it, and then how to use the gifts God has given them. Sometimes when that happens they want to come back. Now here's what we'd like to see. Please welcome them back as the brothers and sisters they are. Give them a chance at a new start. The Father has forgiven and forgotten — you should too. Don't worry about how bad you were burned. The Father will take care of that.

Jesus loves you. Praise Him. And thank you.

Letter 14

**"Dig it, when He said 'a new agreement,' He made
the old one obsolete, and obsolete things just sit
around till they rot away."**

— Hebrews 8:13

Letter 14

A letter to the Jews who know Jesus and anybody else who can dig it.

In a lot of different times and in a lot of different ways in the past, God spoke to your forefathers through their prophets. Finally He has spoken to us through His Son. It was through His Son that He created the universe, and now His Son is going to inherit all things. His Son is the perfect picture of God's greatness and His nature, and He keeps everything together by His power. After He had given Himself to make us clean, He returned to His place higher than that of angels, as proved by the name He inherited from His Father — "Son."

Did the Father ever say to any angel,

"You are My son;

today I have made You My Son"?

Or,

"I will be His Father,

and He will be My Son."?

And on the day He was born, the Father said,

"Angels of God, worship Him."

He runs down a heavy rap about His angels.

"He makes His angels winds,

servants of flaming fire."

But He runs down a heavier rap about His Son.

"Your nation, O God, will last forever,

and it's ruled by truth.

You love good and hate wrong.

Because of this, God, Your God, has covered

You with more happiness than anybody around

You."

And He says.

"You, Leader, made the earth from nothing,

and the heavens with Your own hands.

Their end will come, but Yours won't.

They will wear out like clothes,

and You'll roll them up and throw them away.

But You'll stay the same;
You'll never die."
Has the Father ever said to any angel,
"Sit at My right hand
until I break the backs of your enemies."?
He never did because His angels are just spirits who
serve the family.

Let's really get into the Father's truth so we won't drift away from where it's really at. If everybody who turned away from God's Word, as passed on by angels in the Old Testament, got what was coming to them — and they did — then what will happen to us if we turn away from God's greatest truth? His Son told us about it first, and the people that heard Him wrote it down. The Father proved that what they said was true by causing things to happen that go against the laws of nature — dig it! miracles — and also by giving these brothers and sisters special abilities from His Spirit.

So the new life in the Father's family will not be under the leadership of angels. Like David wrote in the Psalms:

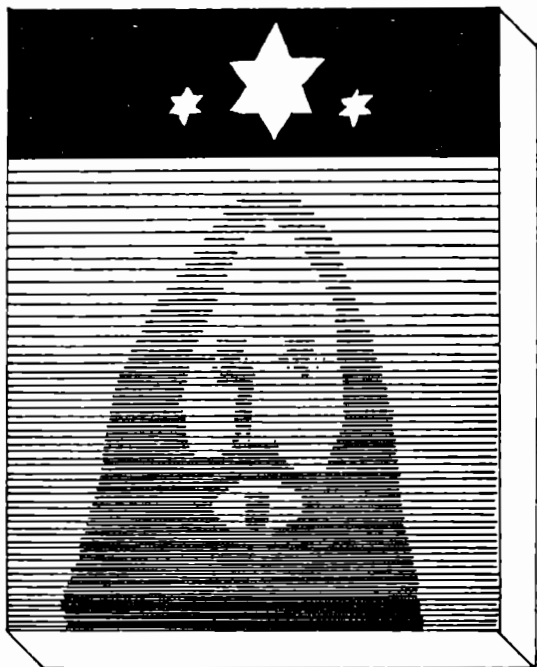
Why do You care about humanity?

Or the children of mankind, that You should think twice about them?

For a little while You let them be a little lower than supernatural beings.

But You have crowned them with greatness and honor and have given them control over Your creation, putting them in charge of everything.

When God said He put everything under man's control, He meant *everything*. Now, right now, we don't see everything under man's control. But what we do see is the One who by becoming a human being became a little lower than the angels for a while, namely, Jesus, who because of His death for us was "crowned with greatness and honor" so that, because of God's love, that death could be the death all of us deserved. It was just like the Father, who owns this whole universe, in



the process of bringing His family to Himself to make their Leader perfect by the hurt that He went through. Now we're special to the Father, just like His unique Son. Jesus, is special, and we're all in the same family together. That's why Jesus isn't ashamed to call us His brothers and sisters. He says,

"I'll talk to My brothers and sisters about the Father, and we'll sing together about how good He is."

And

"I will trust My Father."

And

"Look, here I am with the Father's children."

Because the Father's children are flesh and blood, Jesus took on a body too, so that by dying He could take away the Devil's power to use death as a tool of fear. He did it to set free people who otherwise would be slaves to that fear all their lives. For sure, He didn't come to give any help to angels, but only to those who would trust the Father — like Abraham. To do that, He had to have a body like ours so that He could be a loving and trustworthy High Priest between us and the Father and could wipe out the wrongdoing that blocks that relationship. Being in that body, He left Himself open for the Devil to tempt Him to wrongdoing when He hurt the most so that He can help us now, when we're tempted.

OK, brothers and sisters in the Father's family, take a good look at Jesus, God's greatest Messenger and our High Priest. Jesus did all the Father gave Him to do, just like Moses did everything he was supposed to do for the children of Israel. But in the Father's nation Jesus has a much higher place than Moses — just like a dude who gets together and runs a commune is looked up to more than the cat who's just part of the family. Even though every family has a founder, the founder of everything is God. Moses did what he was supposed to as a servant in God's family, setting an example for what would happen next. And the Messiah matched that example by doing everything He was supposed to as the Son over His Father's family. And we are that family, if we're standing on the trust we have in Him. Listen to what the Spirit said:

If you hear the Father's voice today,
don't get hard-hearted like your fathers did
when they tempted Me in the wilderness.
They tempted Me by testing Me
and ignored My goodness for forty years.
It made Me angry because I saw
they were always wrong in their hearts.
They didn't follow Me.

So I said in My anger,
"You'll have to work on My holiday."

Be sure, brothers and sisters, that none of you are refusing to trust the Father and turning your backs on Him. Keep talking to each other about these things while there's still time so that no one will get sucked into the blind trap of trusting himself instead of the Father. God has provided us with a lot of proofs of His plan, but we'll only become part of His family with the Messiah if those proofs are completed by our trusting Him. Look again at what He said.

If you hear the Father's voice today,
don't get hard-hearted like your fathers did
when they tempted Me in the wilderness.

Like, who was it that tempted Him in the wilderness? Everybody that Moses led out of Egypt — right? And who was it that hassled God for forty years? Wasn't it the people who knew what He wanted, went their own way, and died out there? And who was it that God said would have to work on His holiday but those same people who didn't trust Him? It's clear as crystal that the reason they had to work was because they didn't believe His promises. So don't miss out on His vacation. Get behind every one of His promises, relax, and let Him do the work.

The Israelites who went through the wilderness were told all about that holiday, but they didn't believe it so it didn't do them any good. Only the people who live by His promises can make it through the hassles of life, enjoying His holiday. Like He said, man,

So I said in My anger,
"You'll have to work on My holiday."

— the holiday He had declared when He finished creating the world. We know that because the Old Testament says, "God took a holiday when He finished creating the world." Like, the Jews back then missed His vacation because they didn't trust Him, but the promise is still there. He ran it down through David many years later when He said,

If you hear the Father's voice *today*,
don't get hard-hearted like your fathers did.

Now, if the holiday He was talking about was the day Joshua finally led them into the Promised Land, the Father wouldn't have said "today" through David. So like there's still a forever holiday coming for the whole family, but the brothers and sisters who have dropped the "do-it-yourself" plan for being God's people in the world and are trusting Him to do His work through them are enjoying His holiday now. So take a good look at your life and see that the work you're doing for Him is His work in you, done by His Spirit. Be into what the Bible says; let it cut all the disease out of you and trim off the rough edges because it's God's sharp knife. It can get right down to where we think and live and show us what we really are. If you don't do this, you may be able to fake yourself out, but not the Father. He's the One who sees us where we're really at, and *everything* in the created universe is like an open book to Him.

Since our High Priest is Jesus the Son of God, and He's with the Father, let's trust Him completely. He lived in a body like ours, faced every temptation we face, but never fell for any of them. Because of that, let's be bold and go straight to the Father and stay there. Then we can watch Him give us His loving-kindness whenever we're really hurting.

The Jewish high priest was set apart to go before God for the people. It was his job to make offerings of gifts and sacrifices for wrongdoing. He knew how to take care of his screwed up brothers and sisters because he knew how weak he was himself. Because of that, he had to offer sacrifices for his own wrongdoing, just like he did for the rest of the people. No one grabbed that position for himself. It was a gift from God. Jesus the Messiah didn't grab it for Himself either. It was given to Him by the One who said,

"You are my Son;
today I have made you my Son."
At another time He said,
"You are a Priest forever
in the line of Melchizedek."

When Jesus came to earth as a man, He set everybody who would trust Him free — forever. But before He could do this, He had to learn obedience through the hurt that He suffered. He went through a lot of bad times talking to the Father, crying because it hurt so bad, but He never stopped trusting. It had to be this way for Him to be our perfect Liberator, and that's why our Father could call Him a High Priest in the line of Melchizedek.

We've got a lot to say about this, but it's going to be hard to explain because you've lost your ability to listen. Even those of you who have been in the family a long time and should be teaching others still need to be taught all over again the most simple facts of God's truth. It's like you're babies who have to be fed milk because you can't chew anything. People who suck on a bottle aren't used to God's Word — they're still babies. Solid food is for grown-up people who, because of their experience, have their spiritual senses trained to tell the difference between good and evil.

So let's get out of the rut we're in, babbling like babies about Jesus, and go on to be what He wants us to be. There shouldn't be any need to keep running down the same old raps about turning away from the "do-it-yourself plan" and beginning a new life with Jesus, about teachings about ceremonial washings and laying on of hands, and about the resurrection of the dead and "eternal judgment." If the Father lets us, we'll move on to heavier things.

People who have seen His light and have tasted what God has to offer, who have received His Spirit and have had their spirits fed on God's Word and the promises of what is to come, and then turn their backs on Him

can't get together their relationship with Him again, as long as they keep hanging Jesus up on that cross for the whole world to laugh at. It's like the ground that drinks in the rain and grows plants for the people who take care of it gets gentle treatment from God because it's done what He created it to do. But ground that just grows weeds and thorns is worthless, hardly worth bothering with, and has to be burned off.

But, dear brothers and sisters, even though we're rapping like this, we don't think that you're going to keep your backs turned on the Father, nor do we think that the things that go along with trusting Jesus are going to let you do that. The Father isn't unfair and He isn't going to forget your work and love for Him and how you're serving the other brothers and sisters. Now just like you've been into that, we'd like to see you get into looking for and grabbing onto every one of the Father's promises for you. We don't want you to get sloppy and blow it!

When God made the promise to Abraham, He swore by Himself because He couldn't swear by anyone greater. He said, "For sure, I'm going to bless you and for sure, I'm going to give you a lot of children." (Abraham waited patiently and it happened.) Now when two people are having an argument and one of them swears by someone or something greater than himself that what he says is true, there isn't much the other person can say — the hassle is over. So, since the Father wanted to make it really clear to His people that He had a plan He wouldn't cop out on, He swore by Himself. Dig it, by two unchanging things (His oath and His promise) the Father showed He was being out front with us and gave us a reason to hide our lives in Him. Brothers and sisters, we have a hope — no matter how bad it gets — we have a hope that stands like a rock in heaven. That hope is Jesus our High Priest who has already gone there ahead of us — serving us as a Priest forever in the line of Melchizedek.

OK now, just who was this Melchizedek? What we read about him is that he was the king of Salem, the Father's priest, and that Abraham gave him a tenth of everything he got in the war with the desert kings. Now the name Melchizedek means "king of righteousness," and it says he was "king of Salem" which means "king of peace." The Bible says he didn't have a father, a mother, or any ancestors. It says he wasn't born and he didn't die — he was made a priest forever like Jesus.

Dig how heavy this cat really was. Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation, gave him a tenth of everything he got in that war. Now watch close. According to Jewish law, the Levites who became priests collected a tenth of the income of their brothers and sisters. Remember, those priests were still descendants of Abraham. But Melchizedek, who wasn't a child of Abraham, let alone a Levite, collected a tenth from Abraham and laid a blessing on this man who had the promises of God. (Now it's always the higher man that blesses the lower man. Also, in the Levitical plan priests who died took a tenth, but in this case Melchizedek lived on.) So you see, through Abraham, Levi, who collected tenths, paid a tenth because he was still in the genitals of Abraham when the tenth was paid to Melchizedek.

If it had been possible to make a perfect relationship between God and man through the Levitical priesthood (and that priesthood was how the people received the law), why did there have to be another priest in Melchizedek's line? If you change the priesthood, you've got to change the law. Our High Priest came from a family that never did serve as priests. Everybody knows that our Leader came out of the family of Judah, and Moses never talked about anybody in that family being priests. But He was a priest in Melchizedek's line. He wasn't made a priest by any law but because His life never ends. Remember what the Father said:

"You are a priest forever
in the line of Melchizedek."

The law was cancelled out because it was weak and it never had the potential to make anything perfect. But

it was replaced by a better plan that brings us to the Father. The Levites inherited their right to become priests, but our Leader became High Priest because God swore that He would be.

God has sworn
and will not change His mind.
"You are a priest forever."

So Jesus is the Father's stamp of approval on a better plan. There were a lot of priests around before, and there had to be because they kept dying off. But because He lives forever, Jesus always will be our High Priest. As a result, He will always be able to take care of everyone who ever will trust Him and He'll always be alive to talk to the Father about all of us.

That's the kind of high priest we need. He's pure, innocent, clean, in a different class from the rest of humanity, and in heaven right now. He's not like the priests who had to offer sacrifices for themselves as well as for the people. He took care of it all when He offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice. Because the law was weak, it appointed high priests who were weak, too. But because the Father appointed the Son, He became a perfect High Priest forever.

When we get all these things together, we see that we have the perfect High Priest sitting at the right hand of the Father. As High Priest, He takes special care of every part of God's true tabernacle (the family). On earth every high priest offers gifts and sacrifices, and if He was on earth, He'd have to do the same thing. But if He was here on earth, He wouldn't be a priest at all because He doesn't qualify as a priest according to the law. And yet those who serve under the law are serving in a temple that's only a shadow of His permanent building. God told Moses to build that shadow according to the pattern for the heavenly temple that He showed him on Mount Sinai. So our High Priest has a better position than these earthly priests because He goes between God and man with a better agreement

based on better promises. If the first agreement had worked, there wouldn't have been any need for His. When God got down on His people, He said,

“Look, the time's going to come
when I'll make a new agreement
with the family of Israel and the family of Judah —
not like the agreement I made with their fathers
the day I took them by the hand,
the day I led them out of Egypt.
They didn't keep that agreement anyway.
So I let them 'do their thing.'
Here's the agreement I'm going to make with them
when the right time comes:
I will plant My laws in their minds
and write them in their hearts.
And I will be their God
and they will be My people.
And they won't be teaching each other
and telling their brothers to 'know the Father'
because they'll all know Me,
from the rulers to the humble people.
I'll forgive their wrongdoings
and remember their evil ways no more.”

Dig it. when He said “a new agreement,” He made the old one obsolete. and obsolete things just sit around till they rot away.

That first agreement had a tabernacle on earth and rules on how to worship God. God told Moses in the book of Leviticus to set up a tent. The tent had two parts to it. Inside the first part was the lampstand, the table, and the bread dedicated to God. This area was called the “Holy Place.” Then, behind a second curtain, in the second part, was the place called the “Holy of Holies.” In it was a gold incense burner and the chest of the agreement (which held a gold jar filled with a sample of manna, Aaron's wooden cane that God caused to bud once, and the two stone slabs that had the law written on them). On top of it were two angels

with their wings spread out over the mercy seat. (If you want to know more about these things, check it out in the book of Leviticus.) When Moses finished the tabernacle and these things were together, the priests used the first part every day in worshipping God. But the second part, the "Holy of Holies," could only be used once a year when the high priest went in to offer the blood of the sacrifice for the wrongdoings of himself and the people. By using this symbol, God's Spirit shows us that at that time ordinary people couldn't go right into the presence of the Father. But that whole system of gifts and offerings couldn't make anyone, not even the priest, clean on the inside. That whole system only related to eating, drinking, ceremonial washings, and rules about your body. God used that system, but only until His new agreement came into effect.

But when the Messiah came as the High Priest of the good things to come, the "Holy of Holies" He went into wasn't made by human hands — like it wasn't even part of this world. He went in just one time and never came out. And it wasn't the blood of goats and calves that let Him in. It was His own! Dig it — if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a burned up cow, sprinkled on people, could clean their outsides in God's eyes, think about how much more the blood of the Messiah, who offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice, will clean your entire person from the effects of all your selfish trips so you can serve the Father! And that's why He's the go-between for the new agreement — so that because of His death to set people free, those who lived under the Father's first agreement could get their inheritance as members of His family forever. It's kind of like a will. The One who made it has to die because it doesn't go into effect until He's dead. In the first agreement the blood was sprinkled as a picture of the day the Messiah would shed His blood. That confirmed that agreement and set the will into effect. After Moses had laid the whole agreement on the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, along with water. He used hyssop branches and scarlet wool

to sprinkle that blood on both the book and the people. Then he laid down about the heaviest rap you'll find anywhere! "This blood proves that God's will is in effect." (Right now, you get yourself a Bible and read Exodus 24:8 and Matthew 26:28!) Then he sprinkled the blood on the tabernacle and all the things used in it. And that's another important symbol because blood is used here for ceremonial cleaning, and that shows that there's no cleaning from our wrongdoing without the shedding of blood.

If these shadows or copies of what's real in heaven had to be made clean with blood, the real things had to be cleaned with a much more costly sacrifice. Now the Messiah didn't go into a holy place that men had made (just a copy of the real one), but He went into heaven itself and right now He's with the Father as our High Priest. Also, He doesn't have to keep offering Himself over and over again (like the high priests on earth who had to take the blood of animals into the "Holy of Holies" year after year). If He had to do that, He'd have been dying every year since the world began. That's not the way it is though. He came once at the right time and sacrificed Himself once to destroy the power of evil in our lives. And like men die just once, so the Messiah was offered just once to carry away the load of evil for many people. And when He comes the *second* time, it won't be to carry evil but to carry His brothers and sisters home.

The Jewish law was only a shadow of the good things that were still to come — not the good things themselves. The sacrifices offered year after year couldn't make the people perfect. If they could, they wouldn't have had to be offered over and over again because people who are made perfect don't have to feel guilty anymore. Instead, those sacrifices reminded people of their evil every year. That's because it isn't possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away people's

selfishness. By His very coming into the world the Messiah said:

"God doesn't want sacrifices and offerings.
He's made My body a sacrifice.
Father, You never dug burnt offerings and
sacrifices for evil.
So I said, here I am
(just like the prophets said)
to do Your will, Father."

He said the first part ("Father, You never dug burnt offerings and sacrifices for evil") to show what the new agreement was all about. That new agreement made us clean and put us in the Father's family through the one-time offering of the body of Jesus the Messiah. And still these poor priests every day made offerings and sacrifices that could never touch the evil in people's hearts. People, Jesus sacrificed Himself once and for all, and now He's at the Father's right hand waiting for the day the Father will "break the backs of your enemies." By that one offering, He made everyone who trusts Him perfect — for good. God's Spirit is behind this because He says:

"Here's the agreement I'm going to make with them
when the right time comes:
I will plant My laws in their minds
and write them in their hearts."

Then He says,

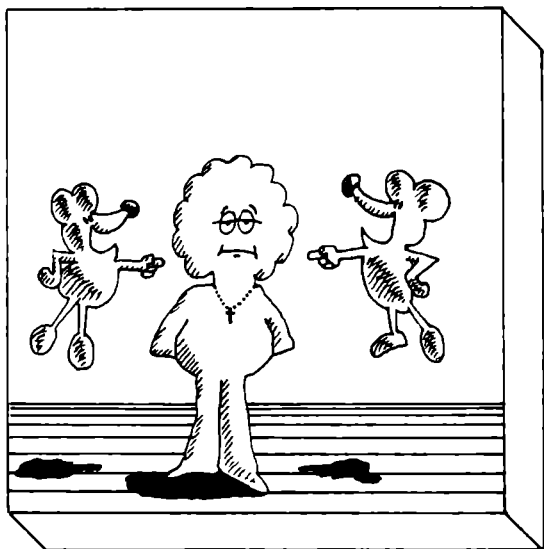
"And I'll remember their evil ways no more."

When God gives us forgiveness on that basis, then there's no use for any more offerings.

So, brothers and sisters, because of the blood of Jesus we can walk right into the new "Holy of Holies" where God really is. The way to new life in the Father's presence was opened up for us when the veil separating us from it (Jesus' flesh) was ripped off. And because we have a great High Priest over the Father's family, let's push closer and closer to the Father, trusting Him like children, because our spirits *and* our bodies have been washed clean by the living water. Our trust doesn't ever have to get shaky because He's going

to keep His promise. We need to be thinking about each other, helping the brothers and sisters to love and do good. Let's keep meeting together to encourage each other as we see the day He's going to come back for us get closer.

There aren't any more sacrifices for wrongdoing since Jesus. So if any one of us keeps on willfully going his own way after he's learned that, he should expect nothing more than judgment and "the furious fire that will burn up all God's enemies." Look at it this way: If anyone disobeyed the law given by Moses, he was offed on the spot on the basis of two or three witnesses. So, what do you think's going to happen to people who walk all over the Son of God, treat the blood of the new agreement as worthless, and put down



God's loving Spirit? The Father we know and love said,

"Revenge is Mine;

I'll square the books."

And also, "The Father will be the judge for His people."

It's a terrifying thing to be the enemy of the living God.

But remember when you first learned about Jesus. A lot of stuff came down on you. People called you a fool. They bad-mouthed you and pushed you around. They did it because you belonged to Jesus or because you were around other members of the family. We've seen you help people in prison. We've seen that you didn't hold a grudge when you got conned and ripped off. You did that because you know that what you have inside is better and will last forever. Now don't stop trusting when your reward is so close. Be strong and do the Father's will. He's going to keep His promise.

"It won't be long now;

the One who's coming is gonna come fast.

My children will live by their trust in Me;
if they cop out, I'm not happy."

But we won't cop out. Our trust is going to last.

And just what is trust? Trust is the reality of our hope and the proof of things we don't see yet. Because of it, some of God's people throughout history are known today. It's our trust that tells us that everything in time and space was created by God and that the things we can see were made out of things we can't. It was by his trust that Abel offered a better sacrifice to God than Cain did, and that showed he was right with the Father. God let the whole gig stand in His Word so that because of Abel's trust, even though he's dead, he's still talkin'.

It was by his trust that God took Enoch right from earth to heaven without dying. People couldn't find him, but they knew one thing — Enoch pleased the Father. And, people, the only way you please the Father is by trusting Him. If you're going to the Father, you have to come on His terms: Believe that He exists and

that He'll reward those who look to make Him the center of their life.

It was by his trust that Noah built that boat, just because God told him to. He didn't know why, but because he did it, his family was saved from God's judgment on the world and he got right standing with the Father.

It was by his trust that Abraham left the security of his home when he didn't know where he was going. He just trusted the Father to give him the land He had promised. He lived there in tents like a man without a country, along with Isaac and Jacob, heirs of God's promise. He wasn't looking for a physical country but a city built by the Father.

It was by her trust that Sarah had a baby (Isaac) when she was too old to have one — she just believed God would keep His promise. And as far as having kids was concerned, Abraham was a dead man. But because he believed God, God's promise came true: "You'll have as many children as the stars in the heaven and the sand on the seashore."

Abraham and his family died trusting the Father, even though the promise hadn't come true yet. They accepted the proof of the things they hadn't seen and admitted that they were strangers and exiles on earth. People who accept that fact also know that they're looking for their real home somewhere else. If they thought of the country they came from as their real home, they could have gone back any time. But these people were looking for a better country — a heavenly home. So God isn't ashamed to be called their Father; He's made them the city they were looking for.

It was by his trust that Abraham made an offering of Isaac, his only son and his only chance to see the promise come true. The Father had said, "It's through Isaac that you're going to have this big family." Abraham just believed that God could bring him back from the dead, and in a way — that's exactly what went down.

It was by his trust that Isaac told what would happen to Jacob and Esau in the future.

It was by his trust that Jacob, when he was dying, put God's highest blessing on the youngest son of Joseph and worshipped the Father with them.

It was by his trust that Joseph, while he was dying, talked about how the children of Israel would leave Egypt and told them what to do with his body.

It was by trust that Moses' parents defied Pharaoh's orders and hid him as a baby for three months.

It was by his trust that Moses, as a man, ditched the royalty he could have had as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He took suffering with God's people instead of getting fat at the king's table. He figured suffering for the inheritance as a child of God was worth a whole lot more than the inheritance of the world system because he was looking to his real home. It was by his trust that he led his people out of Egypt. It wasn't because he was scared of Pharaoh but because he saw the reality of the King the Pharaoh couldn't see. It was by his trust that he carried out the passover plan and the sprinkling of the blood so that the Israelites' first-born sons could be saved.

It was by their trust that the Israelites walked through the Red Sea on dry land while the Egyptians chasing them got drowned.

It was by trust that the walls of Jericho were smashed after God's people walked around them for seven days.

It was by her trust that Rahab the hooker hid the Jewish spies. As a result, God kept her alive when everyone around her got killed.

What else can we say? Like we're gonna run out of time if we run down what happened to Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and all the old prophets. By their trust these dudes smashed kingdoms, demonstrated God's justice, grabbed His promises, shut the mouths of lions, took away the power of fire, escaped getting their heads cut off, had their weaknesses replaced by God's strength, showed real guts in war, and made whole armies run from them. Women

saw their dead loved ones come back to life. Still, some of these people were tortured and chose to die that way, looking at the reality of the day they'd be brought back to life. Others had to face beating and mocking and even being chained in prison. They were put to death by stoning; they were cut in two; they were run through with swords. They had to face life dressed in animal skins, hungry, hurting, and mistreated. (Man, these people were too good for this world.) They wandered in deserts and on mountains and lived in caves. And still, with all their trust, they didn't see God's promise happen on this earth because the Father, thinking of us, stretched history at their loss so that we could be with them in His perfect family.

Look at them! Brothers and sisters, *look at them!* With them watching us, let's get rid of everything that's holding us back and all the rotten ways we've been hanging onto. Let's run the race of life ahead of us with our eyes glued to Jesus, the Leader and Perfecter of our trust. He set the biggest example of all because He looked at the joy He'd have with the family instead of looking at His hurt on the cross and the shame that it brought. You know where He is now? He's sitting right beside the Father and waiting for us. Just sit back and think about Him for a while — the One who suffered through all that hate from low-life like us. That will keep you from getting tired or wanting to cop out. Dig it — when have you ever sweat blood in hassling temptation? You have forgotten what God says to you as His child.

"My child, don't laugh off My discipline
and don't give up when I correct you.
I discipline the ones I love
and paddle all My children."

So let the Father train you like His children. What kind of a child would you be if He didn't? You'd be a bastard! If we didn't get it when we were kids, we didn't respect our fathers. We should be eager to put our-

selves under our spiritual Father and live. Our earthly fathers just trained us for a little while according to what they thought was best. But He's doing it so that we can be like Him! It hurts for a while, but it keeps us in right standing with Him. So get yourself together. It's better for a limb to be healed than to be torn off.

Live at peace with everyone and look to be set apart for the Father's use. Make sure than none of you cops out on the Father's loving-kindness. Don't let any hate or division hurt your lives together as a family. Don't let anyone bum up his life like Esau did when he blew getting his birthright for a bowl of soup. You know how sick he was afterward when he wanted his inheritance and couldn't get it. What was done couldn't be changed, even though he cried all night.

You haven't come to a mountain of fear like Moses did, where the sense of God's terrible judgment was so strong that the people couldn't stand it. God said, "If even an animal touches the mountain it will be killed." and they finally got so scared they said, "Don't tell us any more." And even Moses said, "I am scared to death!"

Now, brothers and sisters, you've come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the *heavenly* Jerusalem (if you can dig *that*). You're with all God's angels and all the brothers and sisters of all time. You've come to the Father who is the Judge of everything, and you're right in the middle of all those liberated spirits of people He's made perfect. You've come to Jesus who is the go-between of God's new agreement and to His blood — the sacrifice better than Abel's. Be sure you don't close your ears to Him. The people of Israel got offed when they closed their ears to Moses on earth. How are we going to escape from the Father's warnings from heaven? When He talked to them on Mount Sinai, His voice shook the earth. And He says, "Next time I won't just shake the earth, but heaven too." What He means is He's going to shake loose all created things. But we belong to a kingdom that can't be shaken, so let's be thankful and serve the Father with

the respect He deserves. His fire will burn everything that doesn't belong to Him.

Keep on loving the brothers and sisters. Keep your house open to strangers because some people doing that found out that their guests were angels. Think of the prisoners as though you were right next to them in the slams. And think about people who are getting messed over as if it were your body and not theirs. Keep your marriages clean. God's going to come down on balling outside that relationship. Don't get avaricious. Be satisfied with what you've got. The Father has said, "I'll never leave you or desert you." And we come back.

My Leader takes care of me.

There's nothing to be afraid of.

What can *people* do to me?

Remember the ones who went before you — the ones we've been talking about. God kept them, so imitate their trust. Jesus the Messiah is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Don't let bad teaching screw you up. Our hearts should be strengthened by the Father's loving-kindness and not by rules about food which haven't helped the people who are in that bag. Our altar is in heaven — a long ways away from that priest and tabernacle trip. Just like Jesus shed His blood outside the gate of the city, under the Jewish law system the high priest burned the bodies of the sacrificial animals outside the gate. So let's go to Him outside the gates of the world system and suffer there with Him until we leave this crumbling city for the city He's making for us. Because of Him, our only sacrifices now are just praise to the Father and thanks to His name. Keep on being kind and sharing what you've got because He likes those sacrifices, too. Obey your spiritual leaders. They're going to have to account for how well they guard your souls. Don't give them a bad time. but bring them joy because it's good for you, too.

Talk to the Father for us so that we keep open with Him and live like we should.

Our Father of peace brought Jesus back from the dead as the great Shepherd of His people through the blood of His forever agreement. He'll make you able to do everything He wants done and make you the kind of people He wants you to be.

Live by what we've said. We love you all.

Letter 15

“Like if a brother or sister doesn't have any clothes or enough to eat and you say 'see ya around, keep warm and eat right.' If you don't give them any food or clothes, what good is all your rhetoric? A plastic trust in Jesus that doesn't cause you to act like Him is like *DEAD*.”

— James 2:15-17

Letter 15

To: All the Street Christians scattered everywhere.

From: Your brothers who love Jesus too.

Whenever your life is full of hang-ups and one down trip after another, be happy. I mean really happy! When your faith gets put up against the wall, you, as God's child, become able to take more. If you jive around with your problems, you'll stay weak; you won't grow. But if you stand up to your problems, you'll be able to take anything.

And if you don't know what to do about your problems, ask our Father, who gives with no hassle, no strings. He'll tell you what to do. But if you *think* there are strings, if you *expect* a hassle, there won't be an answer. His children who can't make up their minds whether they want to believe Him or not won't get an answer. Everybody can see that someone like that is not a together person.

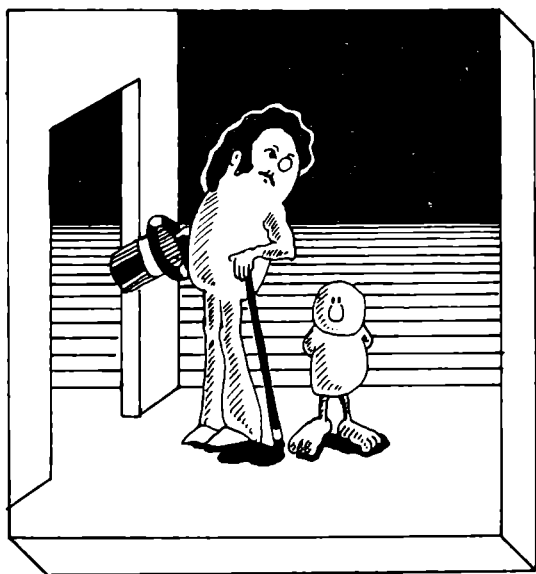
The brother or sister who lives on the street can be glad because God has made him rich inside. The rich brother or sister had better keep his head straight because his money is not where it's at. The rich man and all his plastic collections are going to dry up like grass does on a hot, dry day.

When you stand up to the hang-ups and hassles in life, you'll know what real happiness is. You'll get *life* — life forever with Jesus like He promised to everyone who loves Him.

Our Father never baits a hook to make us go our own way. If you get pulled away from being out front with Him, it's your own selfish ego trip that's putting the claws to you. When a man's own ego puts the snatch on his life, he goes his own way instead of God's, and when he really gets into this ego trip, he finds himself dead — forever. Dig it, brothers and sisters! Every really good thing that people can be is a present from the Father of all truly pure people. He doesn't cop out on His own standard of purity. It's al-

ways the same. He made us His children through the truth of His Son so we can be shining examples of everything He created.

Knowing these things, don't talk a lot — listen to people. And you never have to be angry because your anger doesn't work God's goodness. Shake off all the wasted trips which you don't need (head trips, power trips, body trips, etc.) and start drawing on your living connection with Jesus because that connection is what puts you in His forever family. Listening to what God says and not doing it is just another cop-out head trip. Don't put yourself on, man. *Do* God's word. If you don't, you're into a gig like this: A guy looks in a mirror, turns around, and can't remember what he looks like. But if you keep on looking into the law of perfect freedom in Jesus and live it, you'll be truly happy.



Anyone who thinks he's being what God wants him to be and bad-mouths a brother or a sister has his head on backwards and his faith isn't worth much. God wants us to be so tuned to others that we go out and help helpless people, like widows and orphans, and don't get hung-up by the world's system.

Keep your head straight about it, brothers and sisters. Your faith in Jesus, as your Liberator and Leader, just doesn't get along with thinking some people are better than other people. Here's a good example. Say some dude comes in with real hip clothes and more bread than anybody else in town, and, at the same time, some street kid comes in — no shoes, ragged clothes, dirty pants with holes in them, and no bread. If you give the rich dude the best chair in your flat and tell the street kid to sit someplace where he won't be "in the way," doesn't that show that you're using plastic standards to choose between people? Dig it, brothers and sisters, there're a whole lot more poor people than rich people that God has chosen for His family to be rich in faith. Don't hate or oppress anybody. It's the uptight, rich dudes who oppress you and put you in jail and haul you before the judge, and it's the uptight people of your own class who rip you off. They're the ones that bring down the good name of Jesus by which you are called.

If you keep God's highest law, the law of love for other people, that's good. But if you treat some people better than others, you aren't keeping that law. It shows that you're going your own way rather than God's. Anybody that does everything that God says except for one little thing is just as guilty of going his own way as if he had ego-tripped it all the way. The same God who said "Don't ball anyone you're not married to" also said "Don't kill people." So even if you do what He says about sex, but kill someone, you've still gone against Him. Brothers and sisters, talk and act like people who are free to live under God's law of love. If you think you're a member of His family and don't show His loving-kindness, then you probably aren't a

member of His family and can't expect any mercy when Jesus comes back for His kids. But when you overlook the faults of others, you show how your Father has overlooked your faults because you accepted His pardon.

Brothers and sisters, why say you trust Jesus when you don't live like it? You're just jiving Him and yourself, and that isn't the kind of faith that makes you a member of God's forever family. Like if a brother or a sister doesn't have any clothes or enough to eat and you say "see ya around, keep warm and eat right." If you don't give them any food or clothes, what good is all your rhetoric? A plastic trust in Jesus that doesn't cause you to act like Him is like *dead*. If that's what your trust is like, a dude could rap down on you like this: "You say you trust Jesus and try to be good. Well, show me your trust without doing good (if there's any way you can do that) and I'll show you my trust by treating people right." You say you believe there's one God. Right on! So do all the devils in Hell, and it really freaks them out. You'd better dig it: A plastic trust without action is dead. Dig? Didn't our Father accept Abraham because he did what he was told and was willing to kill his only son, Isaac, himself if God wanted it that way? So you see, his trust and his actions went together, and his trust was made strong. That's why the Old Testament says, "Abraham trusted God and this proved that he was going God's way." And God called Abraham His friend. Are you catching it, brothers and sisters? People prove that they have a living connection with Jesus by doing what He wants and not just by saying they trust Him. Another example is Rahab the hooker, who proved her trust in the Father by stashing the spies (so they didn't get busted) and slipping them out the back door. So just as your body would be dead without the real you in it, trust is dead without the life style that the living connection brings.

So, brothers, not many of us should be teachers

because God lays a heavy blame on people who teach wrong things. Listen, we all make a lot of mistakes. But if a person never said the wrong thing, he'd be perfect, because if you can cool your tongue, you can control your whole self. Like, if a guy puts a small amount of acid in his mouth, it controls not only his mouth but his whole person and can drive him to destruction. Or like a 747 in the jet stream. One turn of that dinky little rudder by the pilot turns the plane wherever he wants it to go. Just like that, the tongue is a very small part of the whole body, but when it starts flapping, watch out! Like a little match starts a forest fire, the tongue is a small spark that can set your life on fire with the flames of Hell itself when you use it to bad-mouth another person. Animals and birds, alligators and even killer whales have been tamed by men, but nobody has ever tamed the human tongue. It's often a restless evil and full of deadly poison. Wow! How can the same tongue that praises the Father turn around and cut people created in His image to shreds? Dig that! Praise and bad-mouthing through the same lips. That shouldn't be, brothers and sisters. Like do you get both fresh and salt water from the same faucet? or apples from an orange tree? or oranges from a grapevine? Of course not!

Listen, you think you're wise and understanding? Then prove it by a life of good as a result of your living connection with Jesus. If you've got a big brain bite going because somebody has what you want or has it better than you have it, then don't brag about your knowledge of the truth — because you're lying. The kind of wisdom you have doesn't come from God but from the world system, and even from the Devil himself. Whenever people want what others have and go on power trips, there's nothing but hassles and rotten living. But the wisdom that God gives is pure, peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of kindness and tenderness toward others, always standing for the truth, and never plastic. Wise and understanding people are

peacemakers who work for peace and goodness in themselves and other brothers and sisters.

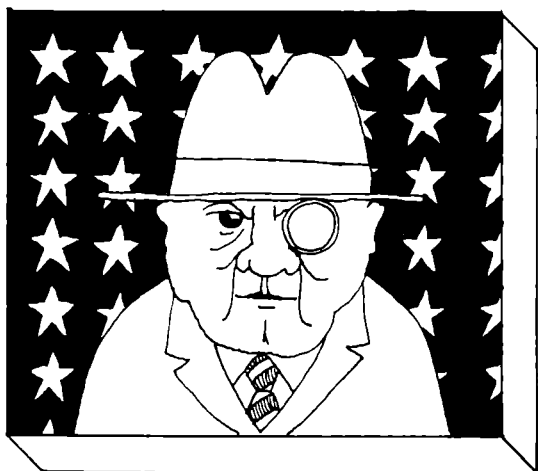
Where do you think war comes from anyway? It comes from your own selfish hearts. You want things and you want each other's stuff so you fight and quarrel over it. The reason you don't have what you want is because you don't ask our Father for it. And your head's screwed on backwards, so when you do ask Him, you don't get it because it would only add to your ego trip.

You bunch of whores, don't you know that the plastic world of materialism hates God? If you're messing with that world, you're an enemy of our Father. You know the Bible isn't putting you on when it says "God's Spirit inside of us wants us to do our Father's will." Another thing to remember is that "God is opposed to proud people, but freely gives His favor to His humble children, even though they don't deserve it." Give yourself to God like you don't have anything to be proud of — because you don't. Stand up to the devil in the strength of Jesus Himself and he will run from you. Give more and more of yourself to God and He'll show more and more of Himself to you. Spill it to God that you've copped out on Him and get your hands clean again. Realize that you've been messing around with the world and give yourself completely to what God wants. If you've been playing around with the world, it's time for you to get your head straight. It's time to stop laughing at those things that God doesn't see as being quite so funny. It's time to get sorry for the rotten things you've been doing. Maybe even a few tears wouldn't hurt. Start digging how little you've done for Him compared to what all He's done for you, and He'll make something out of you.

And another thing, brothers and sisters, don't be cutting each other up all the time. That's judging each other and you're making yourself a judge of God's law. You see, the job of a judge is not just to decide whether

or not someone did something but whether or not that act broke the law. So when you bring down a brother or a sister, you're acting as a judge of God's law and not a doer of it. That just isn't your bag because there's only one lawgiver and judge who knows the whole scene. That's God the Father, who has the choice of saving us or destroying us. That's where it's at. Now who are you to be a judge?

Come on, you people who say "Today or tomorrow I'm gonna split for a year and do a thing somewhere and come back with more bread." Who do you think you are? You might die tomorrow. You ought to think about it this way: "If God allows it, I'll live to do this or that." The way you're setting it down, it's like you think it's your life and you're just feeding your own ego. Well, the man who lives like that, and knows it's wrong, is just plain going against God.



And as for you rich people, you better start crying

and groaning because of the punishment that God's going to drop right on your head. All that stuff you put so much faith in is already starting to fall apart, and sooner or later even your gold and silver will be ruined. And all the trash left over from what you think is so groovy now will only haunt your memory of the good you could have done on earth. Instead of joining Jesus' family and serving the people, you grabbed stuff for yourself. Why don't you catch on now to what you're doing to the people who are working for you and the kind of lives you're making them lead? The Father hears the crying of the people you've messed over. You've raped the earth, ripping off whatever you wanted for your own "good times." You've done your thing and now you're fattened up like a pig ready to be butchered. You've stomped all over God's children in their patience as they looked beyond your rotten treatment to their happy future.

And now back to you, brothers and sisters. Keep waiting patiently for Jesus to come back for us. And until He does, think about it like this: A farmer sows his seeds and he has to wait until the proper time goes by until he can harvest the crops. It wouldn't do any good for him to get uptight. He's best off if he waits patiently; same for you. Just rest in the fact that Jesus is going to come back and it won't be long now.

Don't be bringing each other down — because you might be the one at fault. Only God can decide. Hassles don't belong in the family.

The best examples we have of going on in the face of suffering are the prophets who got messed over when they told the truth but still stayed happy. You've heard about Job who kept trusting God while he went through all those bad times. And look at what God gave him in the end. So you see how good the Father is and how gentle and understanding He will be to you.

Brothers and sisters, always speak the truth. That way you won't have to call on higher powers or things as witnesses. Say "yes" when you mean it and "no" when you mean that.

If you're in a jam, talk to our Father about it. Are you happy? Sing praises to Jesus. If you're sick, get hold of the spiritual leaders among the brothers and sisters. Have them come and pray for you and pour oil on your head in the name of Jesus. Their prayer of faith will heal you, and if you've been going against God, you will be forgiven. Be honest with each other, admitting your faults and the ways you've burned each other. Talk to the Father about the other brothers and sisters so that you'll all stay healthy.

When one of God's children, who's doing what the Father says, talks to the Father, He listens and good things happen. Remember Elijah? He was just an ordinary dude like any one of us. He asked God to stop the rain, and not a drop fell for three and a half years. After that he asked God for rain and the rain came and the flowers grew.

Brothers and sisters, if any one of you gets away from the truth of our life in Jesus and another of the family sets your head straight, then the helper can be sure that he has rescued a person from the path of death, and his loving action will wipe out that person's wrongdoing.

Letter 16

**“He [The Father] hasn’t bought you back from
Satan’s slave camp with crummy money but with
the blood of the pure lamb, Jesus His Son.”**

— I Peter 1:18, 19

Letter 16

To the brothers and sisters who are suffering for Jesus. The Father chose you a long time ago and made you a special person to Himself by letting His Spirit work you over before you even knew Him. When you finally got hip to what He was doing and turned to Him, your life was made clean by Jesus' own blood. We hope God's loving-kindness and peace are real in your life right now.

We're thankful to God, the Father of Jesus our Liberator, for what He's done for all of us. Dig it! He's given us a new life and something to look forward to because He brought Jesus back to life from the dead. That "something" is the gift of forever life which is ours no matter what happens. God's going to give it to us on the day Jesus comes back, and right now He's keeping it for us in heaven where it can't fade away, rot, or even get dirty. We know you're hurtin' right now, but if there's anything that will make you happy, this ought to blow your mind. What's coming down on you is giving you and the rest of the world a chance to see proof of your trust in Jesus. The beauty and purity of that tested trust will bring praise and honor to Jesus when He comes. Even though you haven't seen Him, you still love Him. You don't see Him now, but you trust Him. Because of that, you're celebrating with a joy you can't put into words while you see Him protecting your trust and the liberation that trust brings. The Jewish prophets wondered what that liberation was all about. They talked about it, but they never knew what it meant. They wanted to know who the Messiah was and when He would come. They wanted to know what their predictions about His sufferings and victories meant. But the only thing God let them know was that they were doing their gig for us and not for themselves. And now *you* know because God's Spirit has sent someone to tell you the Good News — you've got something even the angels could dig getting into.

So get your head ready for action and keep cool in your spirit. Focus your hope on the loving-kindness the Father's going to bring us on the day Jesus shows Himself. Separate yourselves from the world's system like obedient children instead of falling back into your own trips. Just like the One who liberated you is really different from the world system, be His special people in everything you do. Like the Bible says, "You're going to be pure and different." Remember, the One you call "Father" is the One who judges on the basis of what's true and what's right, so you better respect Him. He hasn't bought you back from Satan's slave camp with crummy money but with the blood of the pure lamb, Jesus His Son. God had the plan together before He created the world, but now Jesus has actually died for us, and the Father brought Him back to life and let the world know that Jesus is His Son. You don't have to trust men anymore. You can trust Him and look forward to what's coming.

Now that you've obeyed Him and let Him make you pure, love each other without holding back. You've been born again, not by two bodies coming together, but by the living and lasting word of the Father. Isaiah said,

All humanity is like grass,
and all its beauty is like flowers in a field.
The grass dries up,
and the flowers die,
but the Word of the Father lasts forever.

That's the Good News you've been told!

So ditch all your wickedness and hate and hypocrisy and envy and stop cutting people down. If you really have had a taste of the Father's kindness, live like little babies who need pure milk (His Word). That's the way you're going to grow in your new life. And think of Jesus as a living stone, rejected by people but picked by God and special in His eyes. And dig this, you're living stones too. And He's using you to build a spiri-

tual house where you'll act as His priests, offering spiritual sacrifices that God accepts because of Jesus. The Bible says, "Look, I'm building the city of God on a stone that I pick, my own special cornerstone, and anyone who believes in Him won't regret it." Now this is outa sight for you who believe it, but for the ones who don't, "The stone the builders tossed out became the cornerstone," and "He's the stone they'll hate." They'll stumble because they won't do what the Father says, and they've got it coming to them. You are a specially picked family, a priesthood of the King, a pure nation, a people who belong just to God, and your purpose in this world is to tell other people about the goodness of the One who has snatched you out of darkness and into His blinding light. We didn't used to be a family at all, but now we're His family. You didn't used to know His love, but now He's wrapped you in it.

Brothers and sisters, remember, in this world you're in exile. Stay away from body trips that screw up your head. Be out front and stay clean when you deal with people who don't know Jesus, so that even though they bad-mouth you now, they'll see how really pure you were the day Jesus comes back — and they'll see God as God.

Because you belong to Jesus submit yourself to all human authority: the president, the governors, and even the cops. Their job is to punish people who break the law and encourage people who do right. Even if they don't do their job, God's told us to obey them. The Father wants our clean lives to shut up the foolish talk of people who don't know Him. Live like free people, but don't use your freedom as a shuck for evil. Be a slave to the Father. Treat everybody right. Love the sisters and brothers. Respect the president but, remember, your life belongs to the Father.

Do what your employers tell you to do, whether they're good and gentle or unreasonable. Praise the Lord if you get vamped on for doing right. It's no big thing if you do wrong, get punished, and take it. But if you do what's right and get the claws put to you,

then take it, trusting the Father, well — that's what He digs. That's the kind of life He picked you out for. Jesus took it for us so that you'd have an example to follow. He never did anything wrong, never tried to jive or shuck anybody, never came back on people who bad-mouthed Him, never tried to get even, but He put everything in the hands of the Father who's always fair. He carried the load of all our wrongdoings in His own body on the cross so that we could be dead to evil and live right in the Father's eyes. Every one of His hurts meant healing for us. Back then we were wandering around like lost sheep, but now we've been brought back to the shepherd who guards our lives.

Wives, put yourselves in the hands of your husbands. If they don't know Jesus, do it anyway, because your pure life may lead them to Him. Don't worry about how you look on the outside (only), but let them see your new life inside (and that's what the Father wants too). That's how God's special women in the Old Testament lived their lives. Like Sarah obeyed Abraham and called him her ruler, and if you follow her example and don't cop out, you are her true children.

The same way, you husbands should be understanding with your wives because they're women. Do this because they're heirs with you in the new life and so you can talk together with the Father without hassle.

You should all be united, caring about each other, loving each other, being kind and humble in spirit. Don't fight back when you're hassled, and don't try to have the last word. Instead, talk with the Father about each other and with each other because that's the kind of life He chose us for. Like it says,

If you want to groove through life
and have a good time,
then don't bad-mouth people or lie.
Split from evil and do good.
Look for peace — chase it.
The Father's eyes are on His people,

and He hears them when they ask for help.
But He comes down
on the people who practice evil.

Who's gonna dump on you if you do good? Well — suppose they do and they hurt you because of it. Be happy! "Don't be afraid of their threats and don't be hassled." Make Jesus special in your hearts and always be ready to explain with gentleness the relationship you have with Him. Again, be sure your life is clean in the Father's eyes so that those that try to put you down will be shown for the liars they are. If the Father wants you to suffer, it's better to suffer for doing right than for doing wrong. Remember that His son suffered and died one time for all our rottenness — the pure lamb for all us dirty wolves — so that He could bring us to the Father. His body was killed and His Spirit was made alive. It was in the Spirit that He went and laid out God's plan to the spirits of people who had been held captive ever since they shined on His message through Noah and were wiped out in the flood. Noah and his family (eight in all) were rescued when God brought them through the water. The same way, baptism now saves you — not baptism with water (that just takes some dirt off) — by God identifying you with the resurrection of Jesus His Son, who is now at the Father's right hand with all kinds of spiritual beings working for him.

So, because Jesus suffered as a man, you're going to have to do the same thing. When you see that you're dead to your old human nature, you can see that you're free from its pulls on you and you're free to serve the Father. Man, you've wasted enough time misusing God's gift of sex, getting stoned, going to drunken orgies, and tripping through life in total anarchy. Maybe your old comrades will think you're really weird and that you're copping out on them. They'll probably cut you down pretty bad. But they're the ones who'll have to answer to the Father for what they're into. He's going

to judge both the living and the dead. That's why the Good News has been told to those who are dead, so that even though they are judged as men, their spirits will live because the Father wants it that way.

The Father's just about ready to wrap up the whole scene. Keep your heads straight and spend your time talking to Him. The most important thing for you to do is to keep on loving each other. Love makes a lot of bad things easier to carry. Be open with each other, without bitching. Use your spiritual abilities for the good of the whole family. That's why the Father gave them to us. When you teach, teach the Father's truth; when you serve the sisters and brothers, do it with the Father's strength; do everything so that He and Jesus get the credit — and not you — because everything belongs to them.

Dear people, don't be freaked out by the heavy stuff that's coming down, like it was something you didn't expect. The worse you get it, the happier you should be. Then the day He comes back, your mind will be absolutely blown with joy. If you get rapped on for Jesus, be happy because His Spirit is in you. But don't you dare be punished for being a murderer, a thief, or an all-around rotten person ('cause then you deserve it). On the other hand, if you suffer as a member of the family, don't be ashamed. Praise the Lord for the chance. It's past time for us to get ourselves together, children. If God judges wrongdoing in us, what's it going to be like for the people who don't know Him? There's a Proverb that runs it down.

If the people who are right with God
are barely saved,
what chance do those who don't know Him have?
So if it's coming down on you, trust your Creator to
make you do what's right.

There are some things that the leaders among you need to know. Be good leaders of the Father's family — not because you have to, but because you want to;

not because of what you get out of it, but because you care. Don't try to be the big man, but just an example. And when our Leader comes back, you'll get *His* reward.

You younger men, obey the leaders. Matter of fact, all of you should be humble and serve each other. Another Proverb says, "God is opposed to the proud, but He gives His loving-kindness to the humble."

So humble yourselves in front of the Father so He can give you your proper place when the time comes. Throw all your worries on Him because He cares for you. Keep your head straight and be alert. The Devil's prowling around like a lion, looking for somebody to eat up. Fight him off by your trust in the Father, because the brothers and sisters all over the world have the same kinds of things coming down on them. When your small hurts are over, your Father, who brought you into His family through Jesus His Son, will heal, strengthen, perfect, and establish you. Praise Him! Right on! Stand! Love and Peace in Jesus!

Letter 17

“Remember, in the Father's eyes one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day. He hasn't forgotten His promise like some people think. He's just waiting patiently because He doesn't want anybody to go to hell; He wants everybody to turn to Him.”

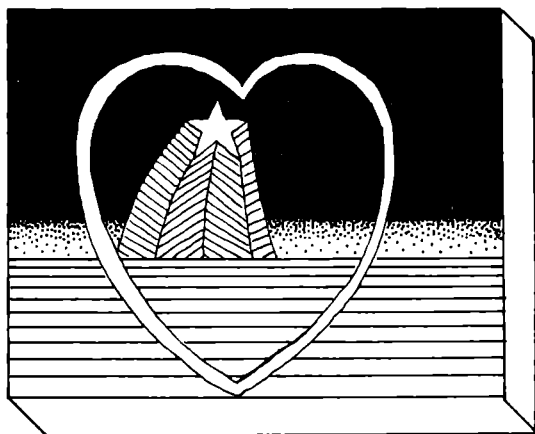
— II Peter 3:8, 9

Letter 17

A letter to the brothers and sisters who are being attacked by false teachers. From brothers who have the same trust in right standing with the Father through Jesus our Liberator. Do you want to live more of the Father's kindness and peace? Then get to know Him better. He's already given us everything we need for a life of purity through our living connection with the One who picked us out to show us Himself. Because of who He is, He's laid a lot of promises on us so that we could share in His own nature, once we've escaped the rottenness of the world system. Because of these promises, get behind your trust with a pure life; out of that pure life, look to know the Father better; as you know Him better, you'll want to ditch your own desires, and then you'll be able to take whatever comes down. When you can do that, you'll live a life just like Jesus, and that will bring kindness to your sisters and brothers and, finally, His own love. If you see more and more of these things happening in your life, you can count on it — Jesus is going to use you. If you don't see these things, it's because you're spiritually blind and you've forgotten that you were washed clean from your old life. So, people, get yourself into the fact that He chose you and put you into His family. As long as you keep your eyes on that and your heart set on doing these things, you won't stumble and you'll really be happy, and not sad at all, when He comes back to take you to His forever nation.

We have to be reminding each other of these things over and over again, even though we already know them and we're getting along fine. The brothers and sisters have been doing this from the very beginning. The Apostles were the first to tell it over and over again and what they ran down wasn't any trumped-up story. Peter, for example, was right there on the mountain when the Father honored Jesus and said in a voice from heaven, "This is My Son that I love. I dig what

He's doing." And now that we've seen the life of Jesus made history, just like the prophets said it would be, we had better pay attention to it, just like a single lamp in total darkness, until the sunshine of His Spirit and Jesus our morning star rise in our hearts. What those prophets wrote wasn't what they thought of, but God's Spirit moved on their hearts and made them write the very words of the Father.



But there were false prophets around them, just like there are false teachers around today. What these foxy gentlemen do is slip in a bunch of lies along with enough of the truth to make you suck for it. Before long they'll wind up stomping on our Liberator who paid to set us free. They're heading for destruction, and they're going to bring as many of you into their rotten life styles as they can. They'll smash the truth and rip you off for bread in the process. Their judgment is hanging over their heads and they're gonna get it. The Father didn't let angels get away with copping out on Him. He threw them into Hell and locked them up in pits of total spiritual darkness. He didn't ease off on

the ancient world either. Noah and his family, the only ones that trusted Him, were the only ones that lived through the flood that He brought down on that evil mess. Later on, He made ashes of Sodom and Gomorrah as an example of what happens when men go their own way. The only one that got out of the pit was Lot, who trusted the Father and really hurt inside because of the rottenness he saw going down. So our Liberator knows how to protect His kids from bad times while He's getting ready to off the world system. He's really down on those who get into perversion and rebel against all authority, including His. These cats are so gutsy (and egotistical) that they're not even afraid to laugh at the spiritual world. (Wow! *Angels* don't even laugh at *these* powers!) But these guys, like wild animals, shining on things they know nothing about, are going to be hunted down and killed just like the animals they are. They won't get any more than what's coming to them. They're just digging their trip while it lasts. They're bumming up the family, shucking and jiving you while they sit down to eat with the brothers and sisters like "good old buddies." They're always looking for a shot at free sex, and they can't be stopped from following their own rotten ways. They grab unstable people and everything else they can get their hands on. God's turned them over to the Devil because they've left His way. Just like the prophet Balaam who thought he could make money off false prophesy, but got stopped cold when his mule put him down with the voice of a human. They're as worthless as a well without water. They're headed for the darkest pit in the universe. With their big empty raps, they use sex to catch brand-new children who have just barely come to know Jesus. They promise them freedom while they themselves are slaves to evil — like when you're into something that deep, it owns you. For a while these guys hung around with brothers and sisters and learned about Jesus, and that kept them out of the rotten ways of the world system. But they never met Him in their lives as their own Liberator and

Leader, and when they left the family, they got screwed up worse than they were before. They'd have been better off in this life if they had never known about Jesus at all than to have turned away from the truth. There are a couple of old sayings that run it down pretty good.

A dog returns to its own vomit.
and
A sow washes herself,
only to wallow in the mud again.

Now we're writing you to remind you to remember what the prophets wrote and what Jesus and your leaders have told you. In the days before Jesus comes back, there'll be people around who bad-mouth Jesus and follow their own human natures. They'll rap down on you like this: "So when is He gonna come back? When's He gonna keep His promise? Nothing ever changes, man. Everything's been the same since the whole accident happened." When they get down on your case like that, they've forgotten that God created this world and that He destroyed it once with the flood, too! But this time He's waiting for His day of judgment when He'll burn the whole thing up. These men will go right with it.

Remember, in the Father's eyes one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day. He hasn't forgotten His promise like some people think. He's just waiting patiently because He doesn't want anybody to go to hell; He wants everybody to turn to Him. But He's coming, and He's coming when people won't expect it. All of a sudden the sky will disappear in a big roar, the chemical elements will disintegrate, and the earth and everything on it will burn up. With that in our heads, what kind of people should we be? We ought to be pure and clean and hurting for the day when the Father makes a new heaven and a new earth after burning up the old one. In that land, only what's true and right will live.

All right, children, if you're really looking for this to happen (and you ought to be), be ready, so that when He comes you'll be pure and resting in His peace. And dig why He's waiting to make all this happen: He's doing it to give us a chance to tell others about Him and make His family bigger.

Remember to keep cool. Untaught and unstable people are always going to distort everything in the Bible — and ruin themselves while they're at it. But you've been warned now, so stand strong. Grow in the knowledge and loving-kindness of our Liberator and Leader, Jesus the Messiah. He's gonna win, children! Right on!

Letter 18

"Brothers and sisters, let's love one another, 'cause
love is from God, and everyone who truly loves is
a child of God and is getting to know God better."

— I John 4:7

Letter 18

Jesus the Messiah existed from before the beginning, and yet men actually heard Him, saw Him, and touched Him when He came to earth. Even though His life was the living medium of God's message to the people, He had existed with the Father forever. His followers, the people who walked and talked with Him, were shown who He really was — true life. We are writing this letter so that you can enjoy with us being together with the Father and His Son Jesus as members of the same family. Together we'll get heavy vibes of joy because of a bigger family.

Here's what we want to put across to you: God is light and there is no darkness in Him at all. (We are going to use these two words, "light" and "darkness," a lot, so we'd better explain them now. By "light" we mean "moral and spiritual insight," and by "darkness" we mean "moral and spiritual blindness.") So if we say that in our inner being we are talking with God, while actually we are living in darkness, there is only one conclusion to draw: We are lying. But if we're living in God's perfect light, we are knit together in common vibrations of joy and the lifeblood of Jesus Himself washes away all of our selfish acts — past, present, and future.

If we aren't out front with God about these wrong acts, we're living a self-made world of illusion and we can't even begin to dig the truth. Although we should openly admit to God that we have been going our way rather than His, and rap with Him about it, He is true to His nature and promise and forgives us and keeps us clean whether we do it or not. But dig it! If we claim we never do anything wrong, we're calling Him a liar and ignoring what He has to say to us.

(As people who have been in God's family for quite a while now, we think of those of you who are new to

the family as our dear children, so we're taking the privilege of calling you that in this letter.)

We are writing all of this to you, dear children, to help you keep from splitting your own way instead of thinking and doing what the Father wants. Of course, if we do split that way, Jesus is right there with the Father in all His goodness to clear our case. He completely satisfied the punishment we deserve for our ego-centered life style and brought us together with God. And He didn't do it just for us but for all people of all time. The way we can be sure whether we're getting to know Him better is by how much we do what He wants us to do. Anyone who says he loves God but doesn't do what God wants him to do is a liar and is only copping out. But the more we obey God and pay attention to His words in our lives, the more we experience the perfection of God's love. You see, if we belong to Jesus, we want to be living like He lived.

Brothers and sisters, this is no new gig that we're putting on you but simply a reminder of your liberation through Jesus the Messiah. And yet in a way it is new because you dig it in a way you never did before. Dig! The darkness that had you hooked is fading away because the true light of the Messiah is shining in your life. Those who live in the light will be loving their brothers; those who hate their brothers are still covered with darkness, whether they claim they're in the light or not. Anyone who hates his brother is really confused about what's actually going down in the world because the darkness is blinding him.

We are writing to you, little children, because
your wrong and ego-centered life style has been
forgiven because of what Jesus did.

We are writing to you, fathers, because you
have really gotten to know Him.

We are writing to you, young men, because
you have won the struggle over Satan our enemy.

We have written to you, children, because
you know the Father.

We have written to you, fathers, because
you know Jesus His Son.

We have written to you, young men, because
God's Word in your hearts has given you
the strength to defeat Satan.

Don't get hung-up on the ego-tripping world system. Anybody who loves that system doesn't really love God. For this whole gig — the craze for sex, the desire to have everything that looks good, and the false sense of security of believing you can take care of yourself — doesn't come from our Father, but from the evil world system itself. That world system is going to be gone someday — and along with it, all desire for what it has to offer; but anyone who follows God's plan for his life will live forever. (Dig it! This whole plastic bag is exactly what Jesus liberated us from.)

Our children, the world system is going to end soon. You've probably heard about the "anti-Christ" who will oppose Jesus, pretending to be Him. Well, there are a lot of people who are against Him or pretending to be Him today. That makes us think the end is near. These people used to hang around with the members of God's family, but they left us. If they had really been brothers and sisters, they'd have stayed. By leaving us they proved that they weren't His people at all. But you aren't like those people; you have God's Holy Spirit in you and He teaches you the truth. So I'm not writing to you because you don't know the truth but because you do and you know the difference between right and wrong. There's no bigger liar than the one that says Jesus is not the Messiah. A person like that is against Jesus and His Father. Nobody who keeps on denying that Jesus is God's Son loves God at all, but has constructed a wrong image of who God is. Anyone who receives Jesus as Liberator and Leader also knows the Father who sent Him. Brothers and sisters, all we're asking is that you live in that vital relationship with Jesus as your Liberator and Leader that you knew from the time you received Him. That relationship gives you real life with Him forever.

We're writing these things to you about people who are really copping out on you and trying to lead you on a bummer. But remember that the Holy Spirit is in you to guide you so you don't need men to teach you what's right. He teaches you everything you need to know and always tells you the truth and never lies. Now, little children, keep united to Jesus, talking with Him spirit to spirit so that when He comes back for us you won't feel ashamed. You know that God is always good, so you can be sure that everyone who follows God's goodness rather than his own is really a child of God.

Dig it! God has really laid a heavy love on us! He calls us His children, and we are! The world system doesn't recognize that we're His children because it doesn't know Him. Right on, brothers and sisters, we are God's children even though we're a long way from being what He's going to make us. One thing we know is that when He comes back for us, we will suddenly be like Him because for the first time we will see what He is really like. (The prophet Isaiah once wrote these descriptions of Jesus: "Wonderful," "Counselor," "The Mighty God," "The Everlasting Father," "The Prince of Peace." There's much more the Bible says about His perfectness, and we'll share it all with Him.) Everyone who has that to look forward to can't help but be pure as Jesus is pure. People who practice doing wrong are going against God because that's what wrongdoing is. Jesus came to liberate you from that. He could do that because He has never gone against the Father at any time. No one who is together with Jesus, in the same way that a branch is together with a tree, is going to keep on acting like he doesn't belong with God (just like the branch won't try to be different from the tree because it is part of the tree). No one who keeps going his own way rather than God's has ever been part of the tree (God's forever family).

Listen, dear children, don't let anyone burn you. People who are living the way God wants them to are good because God is good. On the other hand, people who make a habit of doing wrong are still being led by the Devil because he is behind all opposition to God. Jesus came to liberate us from the Devil's control over us. So people who are in God's family don't go against God because God's nature is in them and His nature cannot go against itself.

There is a difference between the children of God and the children of the Devil: The children of God do what He wants and love their brothers and sisters. And one of the first things you learned when you became a child of God was that we should love one another. In the Old Testament we are told about Cain, who acted like a child of the Devil and ripped off his own brother. We shouldn't be like that. Do you know why he did it? Because he had been going against God while his brother had been doing what God wanted. In the same way, people who are tied to the world system will hate you and want to off you.

Living with hate like this all around us, it's really good to know that one of the ways that we can tell that we have gone from death to life in Jesus is the fact that we love our brothers and sisters. And anyone who hates a brother or a sister is a murderer in his heart, and no murderer can be a living member of God's forever family. This is what real love is all about: Jesus gave up His life for us on the cross, and we ought to be willing to do the same for our brothers and sisters. Dig it! Anyone who has money or stuff to live on and won't give them up to help a brother who needs it isn't even close to this kind of love. Listen, children, let's not hand out a bunch of rhetoric about love: let's get out and do love — being kind and helpful.

When God gives us the ability to act like that, we know we belong to Him; and we can know we are pure even in His eyes — no matter how guilty we feel. His love and forgiveness for us go far beyond our consciences, and He understands everything. When we

realize this, we won't be hassled by guilt feelings and we will feel comfortable with Him. In this relaxed attitude, we get to know what He wants and we ask for and get it from Him because we're following His plan for us. He wants us to trust His Son, Jesus the Messiah, and love each other just as Jesus said we should. When we're following His plan for our lives, we are acting like the branch on the tree and are really comfortable with Jesus our Liberator. Then by rapping with His Holy Spirit, we dig more and more that we are part of His forever family.

Brothers and sisters, don't believe everything people say, even if they tell you they have a message from God. There are a lot of liars around, so check out what they're setting down by this standard. Those people who really believe that Jesus the Messiah actually became man in a human body can have a message from God. People who don't spread the word that Jesus the Messiah came in a human body are not from God. This failure to tell about Him is part of a line that is set down by the people who are copping out on Jesus and all He stands for. You've heard about these people, and there are lots of them around already.

Dear children, you who belong to God have already won the struggle over these ideas because the One who is in your life is stronger than the world system and its teachers. They come directly from the world system and belong to it. They teach according to its standards and, of course, the people tied into that system listen to them and follow what they say. On the other hand, we are God's children and teachers of what He has to say. People who have met Jesus and are beginning to understand Him listen to us. Those who don't know Jesus reject what we say. The reason is that God's children know His voice and they get bad vibes from anything else.

Brothers and sisters, let's love one another, 'cause love is from God, and everyone who truly loves is a

child of God and is getting to know God better. Anyone who cops out on his brother and doesn't love him doesn't know God, because God is love. It's important for us to show love to each other because God showed His love by sending His Son Jesus to die so that we could live through His death. Dig it! This is real love: Not that we love God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to die the death we had coming to us. Brothers and sisters, if God loves us that much, it's really coping out not to love each other. And besides, nobody has ever seen God in person, so the only way people have of knowing or seeing Him is this: His love for people showing and growing in us. As for us, God has given us His Spirit to teach us of our vital connection with Him. Just like branches have a living link with the tree, we who know Jesus and tell other people that He is God's Son, sent to be the Liberator of all people, have a living link with God. And we know how much He loves us because we feel His love and we believe Him when He tells us that He loves us dearly. It's really true that God is love and those who have real love have the vital link with God. Through this living relationship His perfect love grows in us so that there's no hassle when Jesus comes back for us because we're living His perfect love in the world now. You see, there's no fear in love because perfect love, God's love, tosses fear out. When you're afraid, you're expecting a bust, and that's the way it is for people who haven't accepted all of God's perfect love. The only reason we love at all is because He planted His love in us when we accepted the living link with Him. So if anyone says, "I love God," and still hates his brother or sister, he is a liar! If you can't love people you can see and touch, how can you love God when you can't even see Him? God tells us that we should not only love Him, but our brothers and sisters, too.

Everyone who receives Jesus the Messiah is a child of God and a member of His forever family; if we love

Him, we love the rest of His children. Looking at it the other way around, we know that we love our brothers and sisters when we see ourselves loving God and doing what He wants. You see, really loving God is doing what He wants, and that's not hard at all because when we become children of God, we've broken with the world system by our trust in Jesus. Our trust in Jesus as the Son of God not only breaks us from the world system but frees us from its influence. He did this by being born in a human body, remaining God's Son, and dying for us in that human body — not just by being born, but by being born and dying in our place. And the Father laid His Spirit on us to make this truth clear to every child in His forever family, and His Spirit always tells the truth. So there are three witnesses to the coming of the Son of God: 1) God's Spirit in the lives of His children; 2) Jesus' birth; 3) The killing of Jesus for us. If we dig what people set down for us, we should be more willing to accept what God says, and this is what He has said about His Son. Those of us who have received Jesus have the Spirit telling us about the Son of God. People who don't receive Him are really calling God a liar because they are shining on the evidence God has given them about His Son. The evidence is that God has given people life forever and this life is found in His Son. When we receive Jesus, we are given this life, but people who haven't received Him don't have it.

We've written these things to you who believe on Jesus the Messiah so that you'll keep on believing that you have life forever. As you do keep on believing, you'll realize that you can trust Him, so whenever you ask for anything that's part of His plan, He will listen to you. Since we know that He listens, we can also be sure that He'll answer according to the plan. If any of you see a person you believe to be a brother or a sister doing any wrong (except the one of denying Jesus as the Son of God), ask God to forgive him, and God will work in his life unless he is denying that Jesus is the Son of God. If he is, he's on his way to death, and

what you say to God won't stop him. Every time we go our own way rather than God's, it's wrong. But denying that Jesus is the Son of God is just too much.

Of course, even people who become members of God's forever family go their own way rather than God's sometimes, but it doesn't become a habit because Jesus protects us and the Devil can't get down on our case. Remember that we know we belong to God and the whole world system is under the influence of Satan. Not only that, but we know that Jesus the Messiah, God's Son, came into the world and made us members of God's family so that we can know the true God. We have the living link with the Father because we're connected to Jesus, His Son, who is the true God and has given us real, forever life.

Little children, don't let anything push God out of His place in your life. Right on!

Letter 19

**"Now just a reminder of the Father's commandment
from the beginning: Love each other."**

— II John 5

Letter 19

A short note to the family of sisters and brothers in the city, from a couple of brothers in Berkeley. We love you very much and so do all the others here. Jesus and His truth live in us forever. And He and His Father keep on giving us their favor, loving-kindness, and peace.

It blew our minds when some of the brothers and sisters from there came here and we saw them living by the truth, just like the Father told us to. Now just a reminder of the Father's commandment from the beginning: Love each other! Love means doing what He tells us, so let's live by love.

There are a lot of false teachers wandering around. They won't admit that Jesus was ever a man. People like that are liars and are against our Messiah. Be cool or they'll trap you and make you waste the reward you've got coming to you. If one of your family splits and ditches what Jesus taught, he doesn't have God. But anyone who lives by what Jesus taught has both the Father and the Son. Now if somebody comes around who's teaching something different, don't even let him in your house. Don't try to help him out unless you want to be a part of his evil ways.

G'bye now. Brothers and sisters send their love.

Letter 20

"Don't copy what's evil, but what's good. People who do right are God's people, and people who keep on doing wrong don't know Him at all."

— III John 11

Letter 20

A short note to a brother we really love, from two brothers in Berkeley.

Brother, we keep asking the Father to make your body as strong and healthy as your spirit is. We really dug it when some of the brothers came through and told us about how you are moving on with Jesus. There's nothing that makes us happier than to hear about His children living in His truth.

You're really doing a heavyweight thing in inviting members of the family that you don't know into your house. The ones who have been to your place have told the family here about your love and how you shared your bread to help them out. That was really good, because they went out in Jesus' name and didn't have to take anything from people who don't know Him. We all need to be acting like that so we can help spread the Good News.

Don't copy what's evil, but what's good. People who do right are God's people, and people who keep on doing wrong don't know Him at all.

One of these days we'll be seeing you and then we'll have a lot to rap about. G'bye for now. The brothers and sisters here send their love. Tell all the family there "hello" from us.

Letter 21

“Wow, are they gonna get it!”

— Jude 11

Letter 21

To the brothers and sisters whose trust is being dumped on by men who hate God. From a couple of brothers who are doing Jesus' work. We're trusting the Father to give you more of His kindness, peace, and love.

Dear children, it's time to stand for our trust in the Father who's shown us His love through all of history. Men who hate our Father have snuck into our fellowship. They're taking God's loving-kindness as an excuse for all kinds of rotten living, and they're saying that Jesus, our only Liberator and Leader, is a myth. But the Father told us through the prophets a long time ago that these guys are marked for His judgment.

Remember a few things:

(1) God rescued His whole nation out of Egypt and then killed every one of them who wouldn't trust Him.

(2) He has kept angels who rebelled against Him chained up, waiting for His day of judgment.

(3) Because of their wide-open and spiteful misuse of God's gift of sex, Sodom and Gomorrah and the towns around them were destroyed by fire as a warning of what's going to happen when the Liberator cleans house.

But your enemies today are into the same thing — they use their bodies for a purpose God never intended: they rebel against all authority and laugh off the spiritual world. Now that's going too far, because even Michael, a chief angel, didn't dare insult the Devil when they were hassling over Moses' body. He just said, "God will handle you." But these dudes curse at things they don't even understand! And the things they do know by instinct are the very things they're using to destroy themselves. Wow, are they gonna get it! They're following Cain's example of murder; like Balaam, they'll do anything for bread; and they've rebelled against God just like Korah did (and they're gonna get it just like Korah did, too). They bum up your meals in fellowship together because they eat and drink without

caring about anybody but themselves. They're like clouds without water, drifting in the wind. They're double dead, like fruit trees that don't produce fruit and then are pulled up by the roots. They're like dirty waves on a stormy sea, throwing up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, doomed to burn out in total darkness.

One more thing. God's got these guys in mind. Like Enoch's prophecy says:

Look, our Leader's coming with thousands of His special people. They're going to judge everyone and convict people who hate God because of all the things they did to prove they hated Him — and because of their loud rap which told the world how much they hated Him.

These phonies are always bitching, always finding fault with everyone, always following their genitals, always bragging, always setting people up for a rip off.

But you, dear children, remember the words of Jesus' apostles. They warned you, "Before Jesus comes back there'll be phonies who do only what they want to do." Those are the dudes who are going to divide you. They don't know anything about God's spirit. You're just going to have to build up your lives on your trust in the Father and keep talking to His Spirit. Keep yourself wrapped up in the Father's love and learn to hurt for the day Jesus comes back to take you with Him forever. Encourage sisters and brothers who are having trouble with their trust. But as for these guys, you're going to have to deal with them individually, grabbing some of them out of the flames of Hell itself. But be careful they don't haul you into the hole they're in. Hate the trips they're into, but love them as people, created by our Father.

Remember, Jesus is the only one who can keep you from stumbling and make you stand in front of the Father, pure and happy. Right now, let's praise our Father who liberated us through Jesus our Leader and recognize that He's got all honor, all greatness, all power — now and forever. Right on!